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Mario's Magic Moments 58
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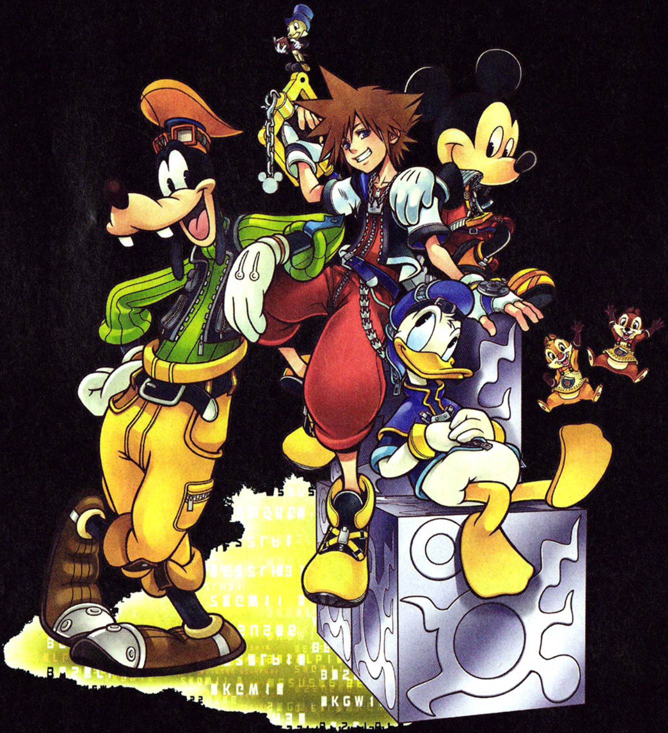
New Dog, Old Tricks 64
Puppy power meets Japanese mythology meets Zelda-style action in Capcom's Okamiden. Get the complete scoop on this incredible (and incredibly cute) DS sequel to Okami.



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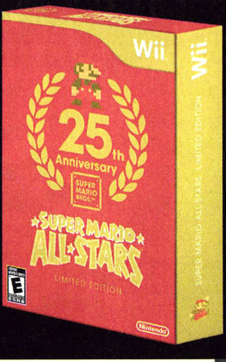
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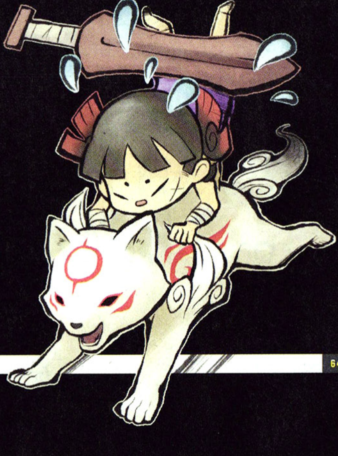

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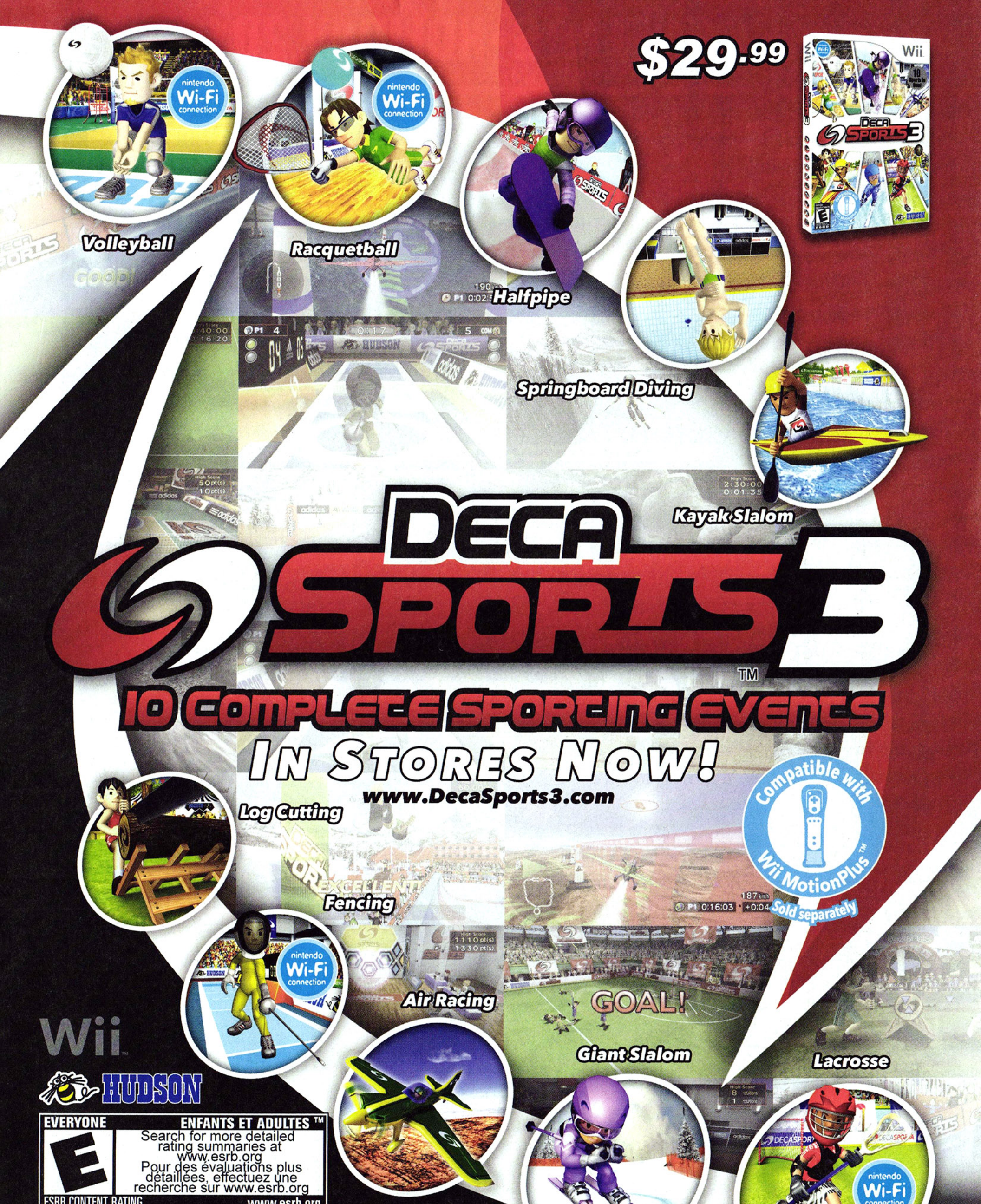
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DS = NINTENDO DS
DW = DSiWARE
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VC = VIRTUAL CONSOLE
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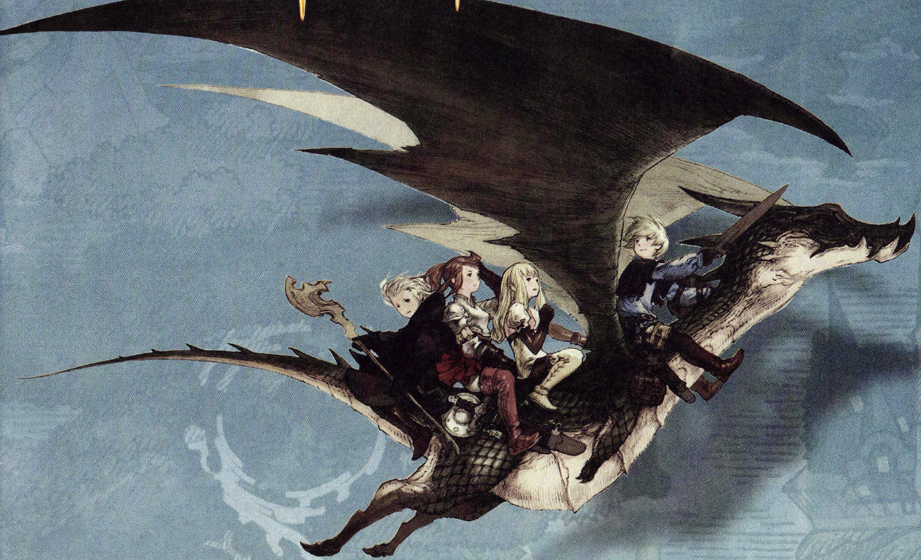

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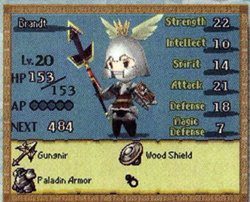

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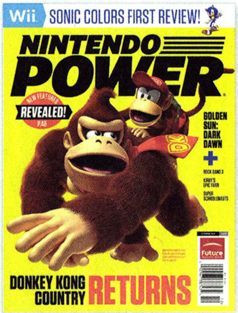
Pulse

Dream Teams

Chris Slate

Although it's been eight years since the release of the first Kingdom Hearts, I still can't get over how cool it is to see Mickey, Donald, and Goofy in the same game with Final Fantasy characters like Cloud. Today's gamers are pretty savvy and it can sometimes seem like we've seen it all, but nobody ever expects a cross-company team-up. They go a ways back (anyone remember Battletoads & Double Dragon?) but are so rare that we never see them coming. Who could have predicted that Level-5's Professor Layton and Capcom's Phoenix Wright would come together for an adventure? (It's true—see pg. 10.) These are the kinds of scenarios that we never think we'll see—that we can usually only dream about—like Marvel vs. Capcom and the biggest series of team-up games ever, Super Smash Bros. Kudos to the publishers who work hard to forge these seemingly impossible partnerships, and here's hoping that we see even more of them in the years ahead.

CHRIS SLATE **EDITOR IN CHIEF**



V261 DECEMBER 2010

Chris Slate here, back once again to answer your letters while kicking back with Donald and Goofy. This month's special letter request: have you ever bought a game because of its box? What was it about the box that sold you? Send your responses to the address on page 8, and we'll print the best ones!

LETTERS

Not So Fast

This is a response to the reader who asked if Sonic's shoes were the source of his speed. The answer is yes. In the Game Gear game Sonic Labyrinth (which I personally dislike, but whatever), Dr. Robotnik renders Sonic a normal hedgehog by taking his shoes, which the Blue Blur has to get back. So, yeah, it was the shoes. Be thankful Sonic has them; Sonic Labriynth is a pretty lame game without 'em.

—A FEMALE GAMER

Actually, in Sonic Labyrinth (a game that everybody disliked, so you're not alone), Sonic wasn't slow because he was without his sneakers—it was because Dr. Robotnik swapped them for special boots that were built to slow down the hedgehog. Sonic must've had a rough night, because he woke up and popped the boots on without noticing the difference. According to the game's manual, Robotnik had waited outside Sonic's window all night just to deliver this line: "How do you like my new invention, Sonic? The only thing that can deactivate those boots is Chaos Emerald power, and the Chaos Emeralds are mine!" If Robotnik had ended his gloating there, perhaps Sonic wouldn't be around today—but the doc just had to keep yapping. "The only way to get them is to find your way through my Super Labyrinth." Oops. Guess what Sonic did next?

Shadow Conspiracy

The storyline for the Wii game Lost in Shadow seems very familiar. What other boy do we know who loses his shadow? Peter Pan, of course! Those stories sound awfully close if you ask me. **—YOSHIDUDE31**

SONIC LABYRINTH
© SEGA 1995
0'44
75

We know what you're thinking—the only way Sonic could be more awesome is if he couldn't run fast. Surprisingly, Sonic Labyrinth proved this not to be true.

I was thrilled to see your Golden Sun: Dark Dawn feature in Vol. 261, along with, of course, the Donkey Kong Country Returns cover story. If someone had told me last year that two of my favorite franchises would finally come back in 2010, I would've laughed in their face...and then it would be really awkward when I see them now. **—MIKE P.**

NEW HORIZON
Matthew

It Takes Just One

I don't know that I would still be playing games today if I hadn't read about Shu Takumi and his games in Nintendo Power. Phoenix Wright: Ace Attorney opened my eyes to a genre that I quickly fell in love with; now I understand how important a good story is to a game. Without Shu Takumi's games to hook me, I don't think I would have tried out wonderful titles like Hotel Dusk, Time Hollow, and the Professor Layton series. **—OBJECTION55**

I love stories like this, where players discover—or rediscover—their love of gaming because they found just the right kind of experience for them. I believe that everyone on the planet is a gamer—it just takes playing the right title for them to realize it.

Profiler

My favorite section is, by far, Power Profiles. I read it with great interest and almost always learn something new about the games industry. Have you ever considered publishing a collection of all previous Power Profiles interviews? **—GATOTSU911**

Thanks, Gatotsu—we love Power Profiles, too! We've thought about collecting them—we'd easily have enough material to fill a book—so you never know. Anyone else want something like that? What other kind of book might you want to see?

Sensitive Type

I just finished Professor Layton and the Unwound Future and wanted to ask this: have you ever cried at the end of a game? **—KALEY B.**

Chris Hoffman cries like a baby every time he plays the Christmas level in Elite Beat Agents—the one where a father dies, and then returns as a ghost to deliver... *sniff*...a present to his...*sniff*... little girl. (Excuse me; I must be coming down with a cold.) In fact, Hoffman can't hear the song that accompanies that stage—Chicago's "You're the Inspiration"—without balling. I frequently play it at the office just to watch him weep while he works.

Power Broker

I have had a subscription for Nintendo Power for about two years, and I've kept every single issue. Do you think they'll be worth something someday? In a lot of them you do special, fun things like the NES 25-year anniversary feature. (That was really fun to read.) I just wanted your take on it. Thanks! **—BRANDON L.**

Well, don't count on your collection to fund your retirement. The first few issues of NP might get you a little dough, but magazines in general don't usually skyrocket in value. But no matter—our fine publication is sure to enrich your life in much more meaningful ways.

Never Too Late

In the NES 25th Anniversary issue, reading all those comments from the developers about the different NES games made me jealous. I wasn't born until after the Super NES was released, so I never got to play the NES while it was a phenomenon. Reading that issue inspired me to start an old-school NES collection. It won't be easy, and it might bite at my wallet occasionally, but I think it will be a fun and challenging experience. **—XARIEL**

Too Much of a Good Thing?

Lately, I find myself burned out and exhausted when it comes to video games—there are just too many of them out there. The ones I enjoy the most end up having too much content to sift through. Because of that, I've yet to start many of the games I own. I would rather not spend a year on a single game only to have it be made obsolete by the next. **—DARKLORDMAJORA**

I can sympathize with never having enough time to get to all of the good-looking games, but your perspective seems pretty extreme. Most folks find an abundance of game content to be a good thing. The important thing is that you enjoy however much time you spend playing, whether you're tackling several titles or digging deep into a single game.

DON'T HASSLE THE HOFF

Dear Hoffman: Why are you such a jerk? Who is Pete? Do you have a family? Have you ever gone to law school? **—ALEX L.**

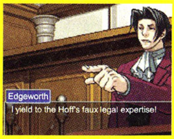
The Hoff says: Since you've asked so politely, I'll answer your questions in order!

1. It's a side effect of the mutant yak DNA I put in my Fruit Loops every morning.

2. He is/was my nemesis. He's basically a giant red beard that talks like Slippy Toad. I'm currently accepting applications for a new nemesis!

3. Sort of. I was raised by apes.

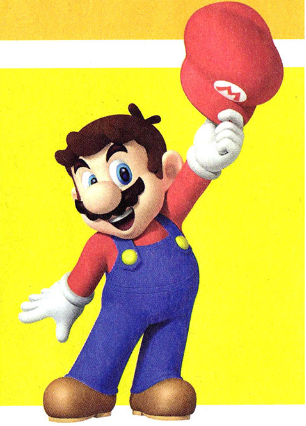
4. Well, I've played through every Ace Attorney game at least twice. That counts, right? I'm pretty sure I could win most court cases by whipping people and throwing coffee at them.



Edgeworth

I yield to the Hoff's faux legal expertise!

If I could create a Nintendo-themed holiday, I would make Mario Hat Day. In order to celebrate it, everyone would have to wear a red cap like Mario's and act like him. Imagine walking around and seeing everyone with Mario hats bouncing around! —**ROBERT A.**



If you could establish a Nintendo-themed holiday, what would it be?

October 18, the anniversary of the NES, should be known as NES Marathon Day. Everyone would spend the day trying to conquer as many NES games as they could, trying to beat their record from the previous year. Most NES games are fairly short, so that setup would be perfect, right? I would start off with the classic Super Mario Bros., then move on to some Contra or Mega Man. Here's to NES Marathon Day! —**ZOOL**

Since holidays celebrate great moments in history, it's obvious that we Nintendo fans should hold the Triforce Festival. It would take place in the springtime, since that's when Link took his first fateful steps out of his forest home and onto Hyrule Field in The Legend of Zelda: Ocarina of Time, arguably the best game ever to have graced this planet. Everyone would wear green caps, tunics, and boots (tights are optional) and participate in the annual treasure hunt. Think of it as an Easter egg hunt, except the participants would be looking for breakable pots, rickety crates, or conveniently unlocked chests. Inside they'd find Rupees or dungeon keys. It'd be the highlight of every Nintendo fan's year! —**ANNA K.**

I would institute National Bowser Day and spend it playing all the games that Bowser is in. I would also draw a picture or two of Bowser and write a story about him. I would go to Bowser's Castle and show him my pictures and story, and then I would bake a ton of cakes and feed them to him. Bowser would become very fat by the end of the day. Once Bowser finished all of his cakes I would play video games with him. Then, once the day was over, I would go to bed. —**TRENT**

A Nintendo holiday should be sporty, so I suggest the Nintendolympics! It would be held in every big city in the world and honor all our favorite Nintendo games. There's the Bowser Bridge Dodge, the Mario Party Board Sprint, the Kirby Hammer Throw, the Yoshi Egg Bowl, and also the Link Sniper Event. The winner of the events would get the Golden Mushroom. —**FINALFANTOM**

My holiday would be called Kooloo-Limpah Day, where people walk the streets dressed in Tingle outfits and create mischief. They would shove confetti in people's faces while yelling "Kooloo-Limpah!" and give out red balloons that, when popped, spread out more confetti. Whoever pops the balloon that contains a drawing of a black Rupee must face "Tingle's Wrath" and be splashed with water balloons. The day would end with a Rupee hunt where official Nintendo prizes could be won. —**PHANTOMVAATI**

We should have holidays to celebrate each time that Princess Peach has been saved. Every time we would throw a big festival, get a band to play Mario music, and have a big parade that includes someone dressed as Princess Peach. There could also be games, such as one where a guy dresses up as Bowser and we put him in a dunk tank. We'd have to add a new holiday pretty often, though, since Peach gets kidnapped and rescued a lot. —**GOOMBA STOMPER**

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Don't ask about the status of upcoming games, or whether certain games will be announced; if we have that info, we'll always tell you.

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☐ Dandy Daddio ☐ Sweet Sibling ☐ Friend of friends

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EVERYONE to EVERYONE 10+
E-E 10+
CONTENT RATED BY ESRB

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NINTENDO DS™

What Nintendo fans think, want, and do

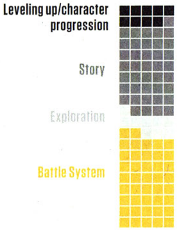
The SCORE

WEIGH IN ON NEXT MONTH'S TOPICS AT WWW.NINTENDOPOWER.COM/POLLS.

2 OUT OF 10

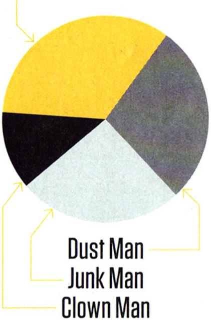
OF YOU WOULD RATHER TRAVEL BY MINE CART THAN AIRSHIP.

AN RPG CAN'T BE GOOD IF THE _______ IS BAD.

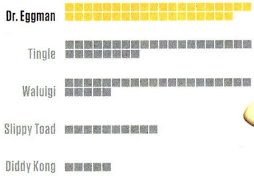


Which Mega Man boss would you choose to be?

SHEEP MAN



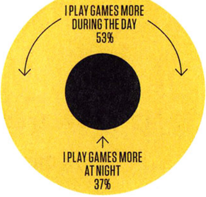
WHO WOULD YOU LEAST LIKE TO SEE DRESSED IN SAMUS'S ZERO SUIT?



FUNKY KONG

WOULD'VE BEEN THE NEXT APE YOU'D HAVE PICKED TO BE IN DONKEY KONG COUNTRY RETURNS.

Funky Kong 49% • Dixie Kong 23% • Candy Kong 8% • Lanky Kong 8%
Chunky Kong 5% • Wrinkly Kong 5% • Kiddy Kong 1% • Swanky Kong 1%

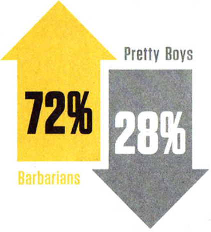


MARIO'S OUTFIT 51%

IS MORE ICONIC THAN HIS

MUSTACHE 49%

HOW DO YOU PREFER CASTLEVANIA HEROES?



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Wii

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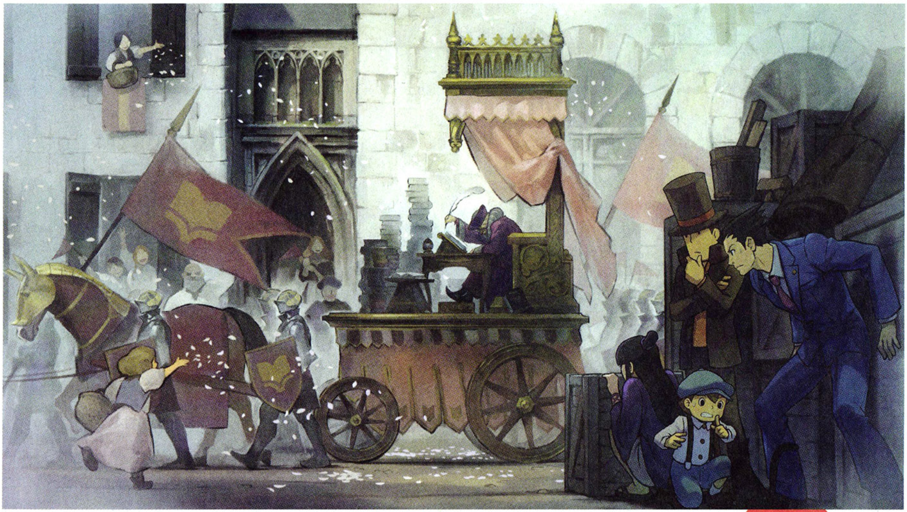
POWER UP



NEWS *from* JAPAN

Visions of the Nintendo 3DS

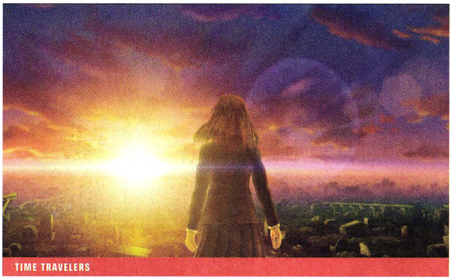
At Level-5's latest Vision Conference, the company revealed its Nintendo 3DS-focused future.

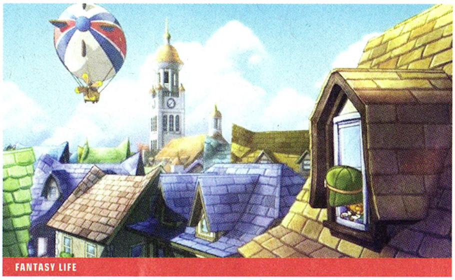
EVERY YEAR, Professor Layton developer Level-5 saves its major announcements for its autumn Vision Conference. This year reps didn't have much to say about the company's new North American subsidiary, but they did announce plenty of surprising developments for the Japanese market, and there's every reason to believe that most of these games will be heading our way soon. The unwavering focus of the show was the new Nintendo 3DS handheld; the company detailed all of its previously announced titles for the platform, and unveiled three brand-new ones.

The biggest surprise was Professor Layton vs. Phoenix Wright, a new crossover title that pits the company's popular puzzle-solver against Capcom's ace attorney in an eccentric new adventure game. The characters meet in a medieval-flavored alternate dimension known as Labyrinth City, where the two seem to be on opposite sides of an old-fashioned witch trial. This Nintendo 3DS exclusive is being written by Phoenix Wright creator Shu Takumi, and promises to feature an unprecedented number of scenes in which characters point dramatically at each other.

Professor Layton also has a new solo adventure in the works, and Level-5 had plenty of new details to share about his hotly anticipated Nintendo 3DS debut. Titled Professor Layton and the Mask of Miracles, the game will explore Professor Layton's past, alternating between the usual present-day storyline and a second time period set during Layton's bushy-haired high-school days. The new game features a number of puzzles that have been built around the platform's 3D capabilities, and will take advantage of the handheld's online SpotPass functionality to update the game with a new puzzle every day for a year.

Level-5 also revealed that Time Travelers, which was announced without a platform at last year's conference, will indeed be coming to the Nintendo 3DS. A few snippets


TIME TRAVELERS

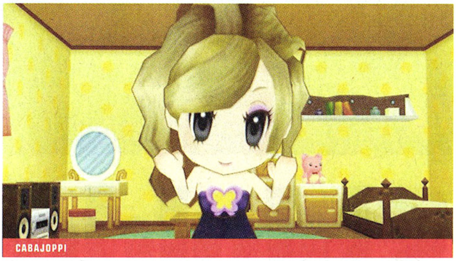

FANTASY LIFE

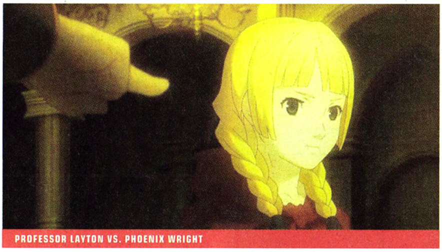
of footage revealed the title to be a story-driven adventure with 3D prerendered graphics.

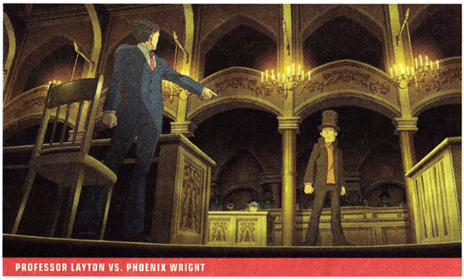
Also announced was a Nintendo 3DS RPG based on Cabajoppi, the popular cabaret-club-girl simulation available on Level-5's mobile gaming service. While the RPG aspects aren't yet clear, the game seems to involve creating flashily dressed girls and getting paid to hang out in cabaret clubs with licensed characters from famous Japanese anime series like Lupin the 3rd. I think it's safe to say that of all the titles shown at the Vision Conference, the Cabajoppi game is the least likely to see a Western release.

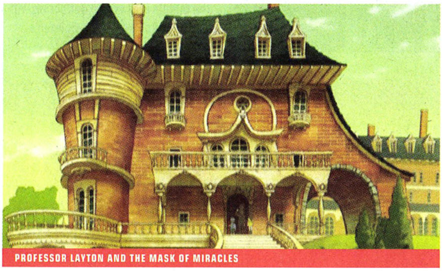
Another returning title is Fantasy Life, which was revealed last year as an Animal Crossing-esque RPG for the Nintendo DS system, created by Secret of Mana-series developer Brownie Brown. This year Level-5 announced that the DS version has been canceled, and that the game will be released for the Nintendo 3DS instead. New staff added to the game's team include composer Nobuo Uematsu and illustrator Yoshitaka Amano, both famous for their contributions to the Final Fantasy series.

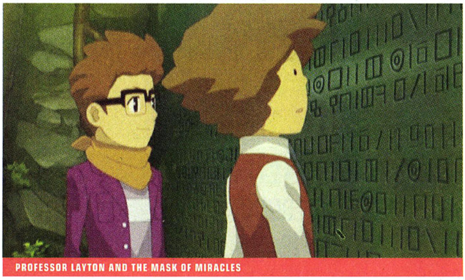
Level-5 hasn't completely given up on DS development, however. In addition to a new version of Inazuma Eleven 3 that is being released to coincide with the series's upcoming theatrical anime, the company revealed a number of new details about Ninokuni, the RPG being developed in collaboration with Japan's legendary anime house Studio Ghibli. Like with Dragon Quest IX (which was also developed by Level-5), players will be able to download new quests and other content for a full year after the game's release. The company also detailed the Imagens, enemy monsters that can be turned into allies for your hero. There are over 350 Imagens that players can capture, evolve, and breed in the game. No word yet on whether players gotta catch 'em all. —**CASEY L.**

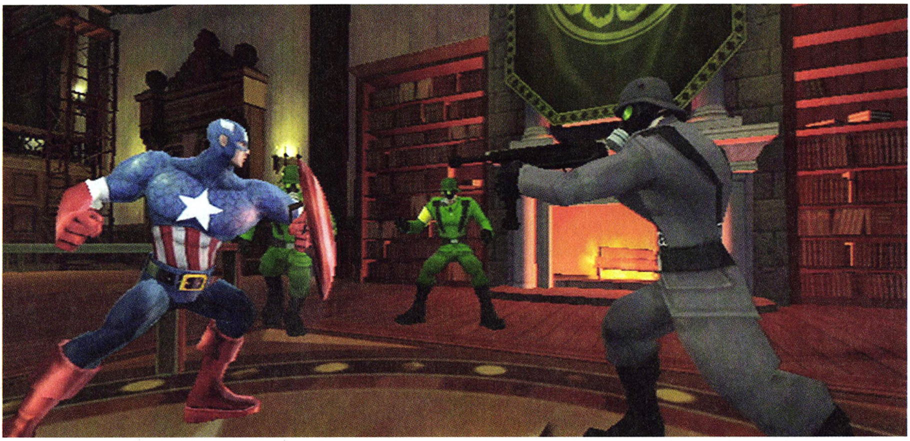

CABAJOPPI


PROFESSOR LAYTON VS. PHOENIX WRIGHT


PROFESSOR LAYTON VS. PHOENIX WRIGHT


PROFESSOR LAYTON AND THE MASK OF MIRACLES


PROFESSOR LAYTON AND THE MASK OF MIRACLES



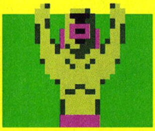
Shields Up!

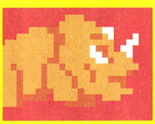
High Voltage Software looks to prove that the best offense is a good defense in **Captain America: Super Soldier** for Wii.

GIVEN THAT IRON MAN and Thor have gotten/are getting video games, it's fitting that Captain America would have his own digital adventure, coinciding with the July 2011 release of the Captain America: The First Avenger film. And rather than being a port of the PlayStation 3 or Xbox 360 version, this one was made specifically with the Wii console in mind; it offers an over-the-top cartoonish graphical style and Wii Remote controller-focused gameplay.

Developed by High Voltage Software and published by Sega, Captain America: Super Soldier is set during World War II and tells the tale of Cap infiltrating a castle that the evil organization known as Hydra has made into its base. The Sentinel of Liberty must face off against numerous enemies—including baddies from the comic books, such as Lady Hydra—using his fists and his mighty shield, which is controlled via the Wii Remote. You just aim at your target with the pointer, and tap a button to throw Cap's signature weapon. But you can do more than that. Joshua VanVeld, senior producer at High Voltage Software, elaborates: "When you hold down the C Button, you enter this mode where time slows down, and Cap can paint multiple targets simultaneously. And when you release the button, he automatically throws the shield and it bounces from target to target, stunning and knocking down enemies.... Of course, if somebody's attacking you, you can take refuge behind the shield. But more importantly, you can deflect.... If somebody's firing a submachine gun at you, if you hold the block button and then use the pointer to point back at the enemy, the bullets that you're deflecting will go right back where the pointer's facing." **—JUSTIN C.**

A WINNER IS...
Shocking superstar team-ups.



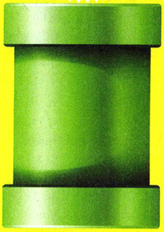


DODONGO DISLIKES...
Unresolved endings.

WARP ZONE

What we were writing about way back when

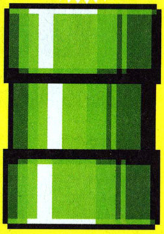
5 YEARS AGO



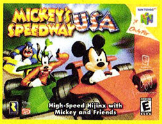
MARIO KART DS
NINTENDO DS

The Nintendo DS really came into its own in late 2005, supported by games such as Mario Kart DS, Animal Crossing: Wild World, Mario & Luigi: Partners in Time, and Castlevania: Dawn of Sorrow. The ill-fated Game Boy Micro also launched in 2005; though the system didn't make much of an impact, the Famicom-themed version of the handheld, released in early December, was very collectible.

10 YEARS AGO

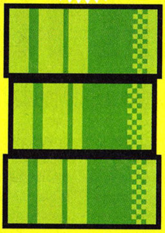


THE LEGEND OF ZELDA
MAJORA'S MASK
COLLECTOR'S EDITION


MICKEY'S SPEEDWAY USA
High-Speed Hijinx with Mickey and Friends

Nintendo's partnership with Rare was certainly paying off during the 2000 holiday season, producing some of the biggest titles of the day such as Mickey's Speedway USA for the Nintendo 64 and the impressive Game Boy Color port of Donkey Kong Country. But those weren't the only games high on Nintendo fans' wish lists; The Legend of Zelda: Majora's Mask was also among the season's top offerings.

20 YEARS AGO



In time for the 1990 holiday season, Nintendo released an all-new NES bundle—the Nintendo Sports Set—which included the system, four controllers, a four-player adaptor, and a 2-in-1 cartridge that contained Super Spike V'Ball and World Cup Soccer. Other noteworthy 1990 holiday releases were Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles II: The Arcade Game, Mega Man 3, Castlevania III, Shadow of the Ninja, and Star Tropics.

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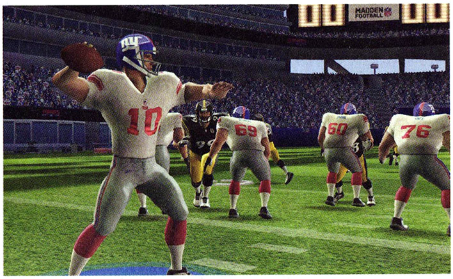
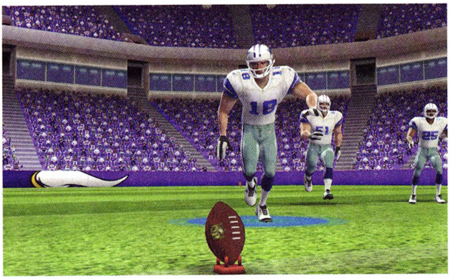




3D? It's in the Game.

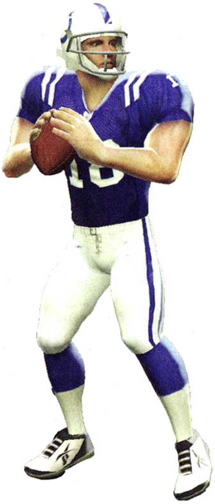
EA Sports brings the gridiron to the third dimension with **Madden NFL Football** for the Nintendo 3DS.

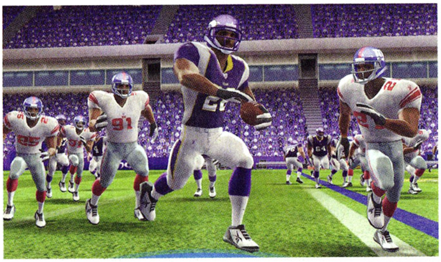
AMONG THE DOZENS of titles announced for the Nintendo 3DS system at this year's E3 was a version of EA Sports's venerable Madden NFL franchise, and now we've got the first screens and details. The core game takes the same authentic approach to the sport as its console counterparts, allowing armchair quarterbacks to play through a full NFL season. Also like the console games, it will include the new GameFlow option, which helps keep the action moving by automatically choosing plays for you based on the situation. You can still call the plays yourself if you prefer, though, and the Call Your Shots feature gives you the opportunity to tweak things at the line of scrimmage by drawing new receiver routes or defensive assignments on the touch screen. Rounding out the package is an arcade-style five-on-five mode, though it bears mentioning that there are no multiplayer plans for the game.

Of course, what separates this Madden from all others is 3D, and the team at EA North Carolina intends to maximize that impact. "One of the things you'll notice when you play this version of Madden is that the camera looks different from any other versions," designer Tony Marinello told us during a recent interview. "With the running camera, for example, we bring it in much closer on the player than you are used to seeing previously because we've found that's a great use of 3D. And we have more dynamic shots and different ways to highlight the action while still giving the user all the information he needs to play the game." Ryan Stradling, director of product development, added, "We did a good amount of research into what the movie industry was doing with camera shots and stuff like that to take advantage of the 3D while making sure the user doesn't get distracted and can focus on the awesomeness of it."

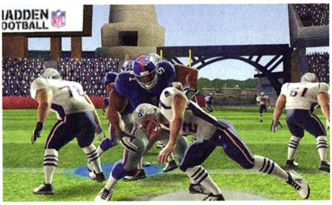
Stradling commented that the development tools for the Nintendo 3DS make it a breeze to implement the 3D effects, and he also praised the system's horsepower. "It's a pretty powerful handheld," Stradling commented. "The graphical processing unit on it is really sweet. You'll notice we've got some rim lighting effects, for example, and environment maps on the helmets. Plus we're using a lot of the assets from the 'next-gen' versions of the game."

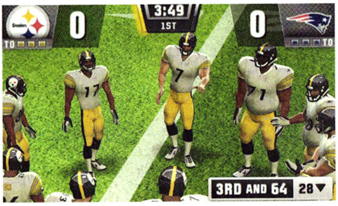
EA hasn't announced a specific release date for Madden NFL Football, but we expect it to hit right around the launch of the Nintendo 3DS. **—STEVE T.**





[Right] Adrian Peterson versus a defensive back? We'll put our money on "All Day."





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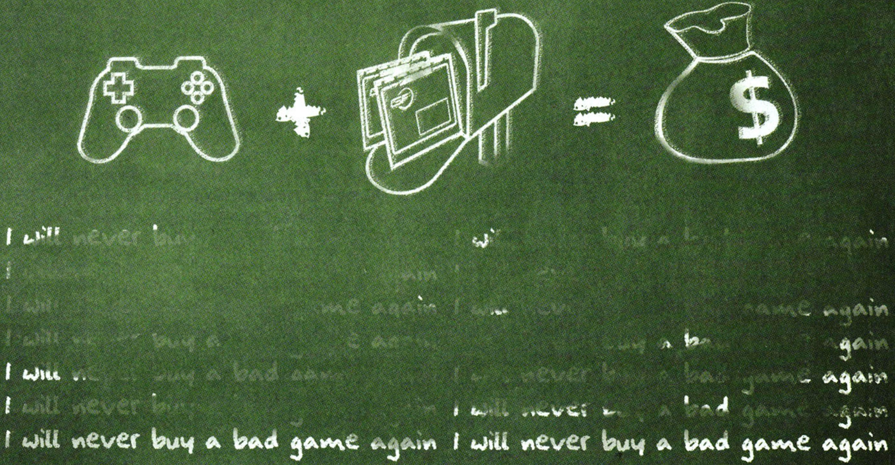
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Picking Up Speed

Producer Takashi Iizuka gives the final word on a successful 2010 for Sonic the Hedgehog.

With the release of Sonic Colors and Sonic the Hedgehog 4: Episode 1, this was the Blue Blur's best year in a very long time. We recently caught up with the man in charge of all things hedgehog, Sonic Team producer Takashi Iizuka.

NINTENDO POWER Let's start with Sonic Colors. One of the reasons we enjoyed the game so much is that it features a lot of great platforming, which is an aspect of the series that had sort of been pushed to the side in recent years. What prompted you to bring it back to the fore?

TAKASHI IIZUKA As you know, Sonic was born to become an iconic game character in the action-platforming genre. There has been a variety of titles since then—some were more focused on speed, while some focused on story—but Sonic is still an action-platforming character after 19 years. Sonic 4: Episode 1 and Sonic Colors, which I worked on as producer, are designed to put greater focus on what made Sonic special in the first place.

All of that platforming also helps create a varied tempo. There are still plenty of high-speed thrills, but the game isn't afraid to slow things down. Was that something the team actively pursued from the beginning for Sonic Colors?

Sonic's brand of action should never conclude with just running at high speed. Running at high speed, areas that require cautious jumps, and areas where making daring jumps would lead to shortcuts—it's about finding the right mixture and balance. This mixture defines Sonic's high-speed action.

Almost all of the deepest gameplay elements take place in 2D, with the switches to 3D reserved for quick bursts of simpler action. Do you feel like that balance is the best fit for the series?

Forcing players to make difficult jumps in 3D sections would give the impression that the game is unreasonably hard, as it is more difficult to get a sense of distance from a 3D perspective. Therefore, we've limited the 3D sections to left/right dodging and speediness, whereas the 2D view is where the platform action can be found. We feel this is the best balance. However, action games have unlimited possibilities, so we also believe that we can provide something different in the future while paying attention to the feedback from all our fans out there.

Can you talk about any ideas for additional Wisps that ended up on the cutting-room floor? How did you decide which power-ups stayed and which had to go?

We came up with so many ideas for color powers, and there were a lot that didn't make it into the game. Most of those were either ruining the high-speed action or were limited to just one type of use. The color powers that we included had to lend themselves to multiple situations.

If we're not mistaken, this is the first time Sonic has ever been able to double-jump. What lead to that inclusion?

We added it to make the platforming parts more user-friendly. The 2D sections in particular require tricky platforming in some areas, so the double jump was needed as a kind of recovery for failing on the first jump.

Aside from Tails and Dr. Eggman, none of the franchise's traditional supporting characters appear in Sonic Colors. What's more, the story is relatively simple and lighthearted compared to recent titles in the series. Why was it important to show restraint in those regards and how do you feel it benefitted the game?

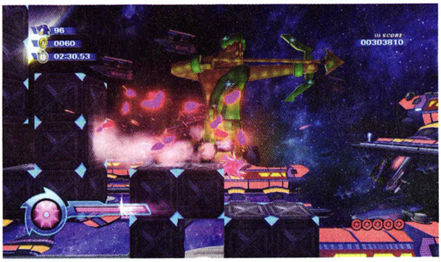
Basically, we focused the story around the franchise's three main characters—Sonic, Tails, and Dr. Eggman—though the DS version of the game features other characters in bit parts. This is because Sonic Colors is a game about Sonic's high-speed action. In terms of the narrative, we've accentuated the fun, which is something that character-action games should have instead of going the more serious route. This is, again, due to the fact that the game had a strong concept as an action-platforming game rather than an action-adventure game. The approach is dependent on the concept for the game, and we could possibly have the other characters appear in other genres, like party games.

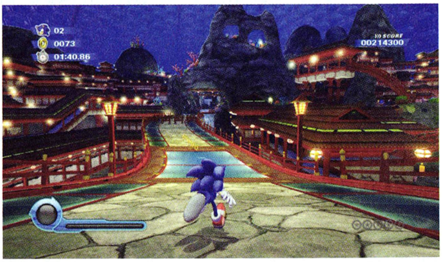
It feels like Sonic Colors was influenced by the Mario series in some ways. Did the team look to Sonic's old rival for inspiration?

The Mario series is one of my favorites, so I obviously play it quite a bit, but those titles are very different from Sonic games. So, unfortunately, we can't take reference from there. We always research the previous Sonic titles and try to figure out what was good or bad, then use those lessons to create the best high-speed action.

This was Morio Kishimoto's first time in the director's chair. Why was he chosen for the task and what sort of approach did he bring to the project?

He has had a very long experience in game development, including arcade games, so his contribution to Sonic Colors was valuable. From those experiences, he is very good at structuring how the game should flow to make it exciting, fun, and enjoyable to play. Video games involve many





other aspects that determine the quality, such as graphics and music, and he enjoyed the challenge of making decisions regarding all of those elements. But it's a team effort and we're a team—Sonic Team, to be precise!

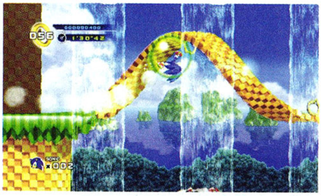
Last time we spoke, you said, "I feel that we need to look beyond each individual title and take a wider view with more of a focus on the overall Sonic franchise." Along those lines, have you established any new rules that all future Sonic titles should follow? And can fans consider Sonic Colors indicative of the direction the franchise will take?
In order to expand the overall franchise, I believe we need the core of the franchise—action-platforming games—to be perfected. In order to expand the franchise to genres like racing, sports, etc., it is important to have a clear, established core. Also, action-platforming can come in many different forms, so we came up with Sonic 4, and not just Sonic Colors, to appeal to a wider audience.

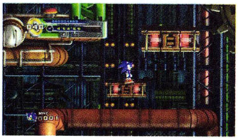
Is there any chance we'll see a direct sequel to Sonic Colors?
Well, whether we create a sequel to Sonic Colors is up in the air, but we would like to take the action-platforming basis of Sonic Colors and include it in future titles.

Switching gears to Sonic the Hedgehog 4: Episode 1, why was now the right time to finally do a sequel to the "classic" Sonic titles?
From the moment Sonic evolved into a 3D game, I had a strong passion to continue 2D Sonic games. We have done so in the handheld versions, but we thought having 3D Sonic and 2D Sonic coexist on the consoles would be difficult. However, the emergence of online distribution markets, where we can sell at lower price points, has provided a big push for us to create 2D Sonic games again.

How do you strike the right balance between staying true to the Genesis games and evolving the series with elements like the homing attack?
We've focused on level design, which allows jumping action and high-speed running—the signature characteristics of the classic series. On top of that, just as the spin dash was added in Sonic 2, we've included the homing attack to make the game more user-friendly. There may be new actions in the future episodes as well, but we will have to be careful not to ruin the basis of the gameplay.

We enjoyed Episode 1, but the physics felt a bit off compared to the Genesis games. Is that something you'll look to tweak in future episodes?
In this title, we have not done a straight port of the gameplay [from the Genesis games], but rather updated it with actions which could not be done in the previous titles, like ceiling-running. These changes probably made for a different feel to the longtime Sonic fans. We're happy for feedback like this, and we'll make sure we can improve the quality even further in upcoming titles. It is challenging to make everyone happy, as we have young fans, new fans, older fans, jump-'n'-run fans, retro fans, etc. We're confident all of them do enjoy playing Sonic 4, though.





Sonic fans are some of the most passionate and vocal we've ever seen. How much will you take their feedback into account for future episodes of Sonic 4?
We will continue to do that for the Sonic 4 series, and we're trying hard to please the longtime fans in that process. Their voices are being heard by the development team, and we'd like to find the right balance between meeting those expectations and providing new surprises.

Finally, 2011 marks the 20th anniversary for Sonic the Hedgehog. Can you give us any hints as to what Sonic Team has in store for the occasion?
We can't give you any specific details, but we would like to celebrate the 20th anniversary with our fantastic fans, who have supported Sonic and Sega for such a long time.

CORRECTION: In last month's Wii review for Sonic Colors, we credited Jun Senoue as the game's composer. Though Senoue did contribute to the game's soundtrack, most of the music was composed by Tomoya Ohtani. We regret the error.

TOM CLANCY'S
GHOST RECON
Wii
UBISOFT
www.ghostrecon.com/wii
TEEN
T
CONTENT RATED BY
ESRB
Violence

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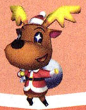
POWER QUIZ

EASY

In the Animal Crossing series, what is the name of the reindeer who visits your town for a special event during December?



AVERAGE

In Donkey Kong Country 3, what word (along with a secret code) activates holiday-themed bonus levels?

HARDCORE

What Game Boy Advance title from Telegames places you in the boots of Santa Claus himself?

ANSWERS

EASY: Jingle; AVERAGE: Merry; HARDCORE: Santa Claus Saves the Earth

Get Your Groudon!

Pop this password into **Poképark Wii: Pikachu's Adventure** to unlock the gargantuan Ground-type Pokémon.

DO YOU KNOW that you can make certain Pokémon appear in PokéPark Wii: Pikachu's Adventure by inputting secret passwords? Input the password below and Groudon will show up in the Lava Zone, where you can befriend it and then use Groudon to play certain Attractions. Don't be shy—go introduce yourself! —**CHRIS S.**

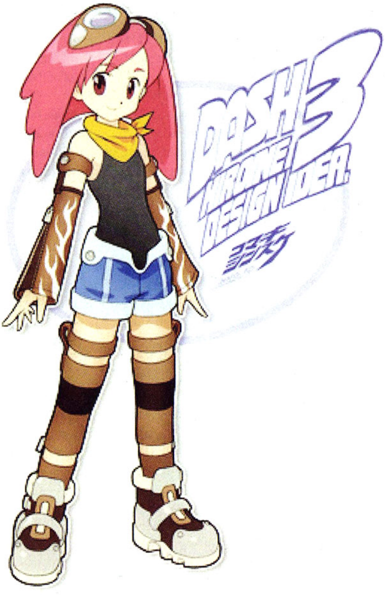
Groudon Password:

49446209

A Legend in the Making

Capcom wants your help designing **Mega Man Legends 3.**

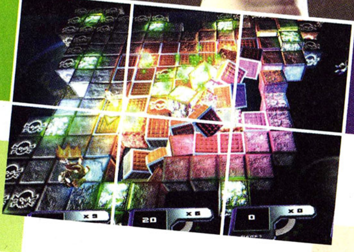
LAST ISSUE we mentioned that Capcom's Mega Man Legends 3 (headed to the Nintendo 3DS handheld) would "allow for fan input on a level never before seen." At the New York Comic Con held in October, Capcom's global head of production, Keiji Inafune, elaborated on what that means: "This is a game for the fans and it is going to be made by the fans...." To establish the connection between fans and developers, Capcom has created a portal at its Capcom Unity website. There, the company will accept fan input, including boss-fight ideas, character designs, and voice-actor suggestions. Recently a poll was held on the site to choose a new heroine to costar in the adventure. (The winner, designed by Shinsuke Komaki, is to the right.) Head over to www.capcom-unity.com/devroom/ and help make Mega Man Legends 3 the game you want to play. —**PHIL T.**



GET IN THE GAME

DigiPen Institute of Technology proudly presents a two-week summer workshop series for video game and technology enthusiasts in Grade 8 and beyond. These workshops are specially designed to introduce participants of all experience levels to the fundamentals of:

- **Video Game Programming**
- **3D Computer Animation**
- **Game Design**
- **Robotics**



Not yet in Grade 8?
ProjectFUN also offers Junior Workshops in both video game design and animation for students who are in Grades 5-7.

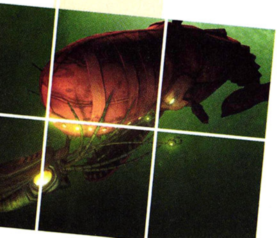
For more information, visit:
http://workshops.digipen.edu

GET $100 OFF*

Join us for Preview Day on Saturday, April 23, 2011.

Get a sneak peek at the workshops and $100 off!* For more information visit:
http://projectfun.digipen.edu/previewday

** Preview Day participants will receive a $100 coupon good toward any one Workshop tuition fee.*



DIGIPEN ProjectFUN WORKSHOPS

DigiPen INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY

9931 Willows Road NE, Redmond, WA 98052
Phone: (425) 558-0299 • Toll-Free (866) 478-5236

STAR POWER

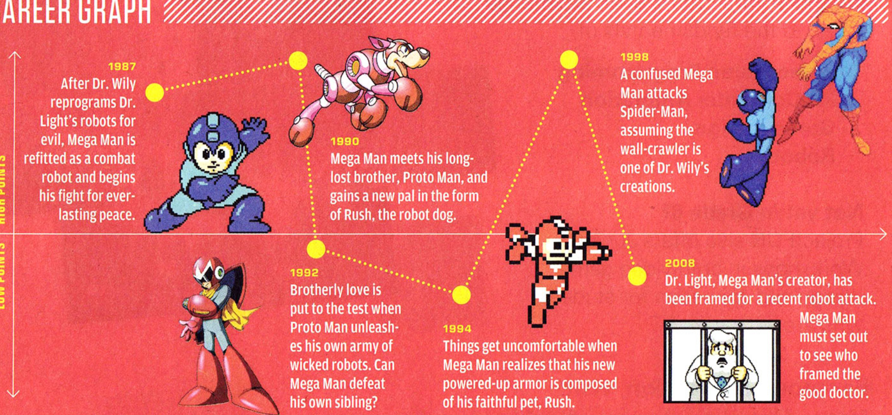
A closer look at the characters we love

FIRST APPEARANCE:
MEGA MAN
NES, 1987

Mega Man

It's been nearly a quarter of a century, and Capcom's beloved Blue Bomber is still squashing Dr. Wily's villainous schemes.

CAREER GRAPH



1987
After Dr. Wily reprograms Dr. Light's robots for evil, Mega Man is refitted as a combat robot and begins his fight for everlasting peace.

1990
Mega Man meets his long-lost brother, Proto Man, and gains a new pal in the form of Rush, the robot dog.

1992
Brotherly love is put to the test when Proto Man unleashes his own army of wicked robots. Can Mega Man defeat his own sibling?

1994
Things get uncomfortable when Mega Man realizes that his new powered-up armor is composed of his faithful pet, Rush.

1998
A confused Mega Man attacks Spider-Man, assuming the wall-crawler is one of Dr. Wily's creations.

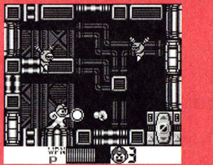
2008
Dr. Light, Mega Man's creator, has been framed for a recent robot attack. Mega Man must set out to see who framed the good doctor.

OUR FAVORITE MEGA MAN GAMES

Mega Man 2

NES, 1989

There's a reason that Mega Man's second game is still regarded as one of his finest—it's nearly perfect on every level. The graphics, stage design, control, and music are all outstanding.



Mega Man V

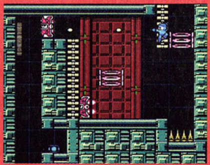
GAME BOY, 1994

Not only does this game feature new Robot Masters based on the planets, but Mega Man's Buster gets upgraded to the fist-launching Mega Arm. He also gets a new buddy—Tango, the robo-cat.

Mega Man: The Wily Wars

SEGA GENESIS, 1994

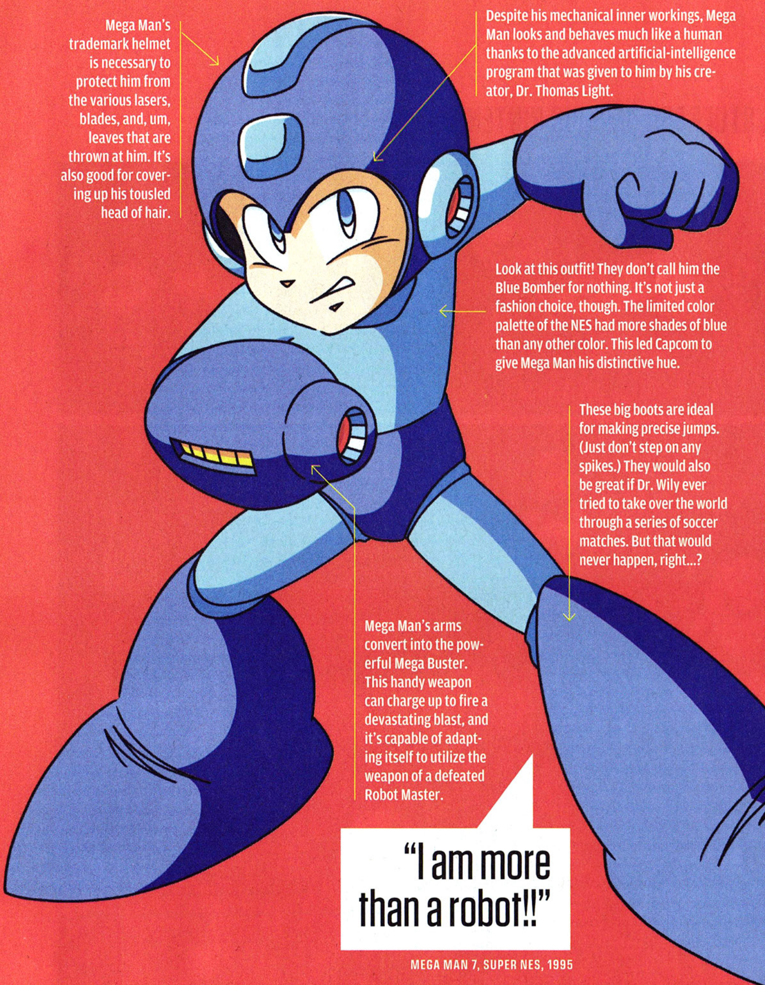
This compilation cart features updated versions of Mega Man's first three adventures as well as a new mode called the Wily Tower. In the US, it was playable only through Sega's short-lived Sega Channel service.



Mega Man 9

WiiWARE, 2008

In an age of polygons and HD, Mega Man 9 returns our hero to his humble 8-bit roots. This well-designed (and megachallenging) retro revival reminds us why we fell in love with Mega Man in the first place.



Mega Man's trademark helmet is necessary to protect him from the various lasers, blades, and, um, leaves that are thrown at him. It's also good for covering up his tousled head of hair.

Despite his mechanical inner workings, Mega Man looks and behaves much like a human thanks to the advanced artificial-intelligence program that was given to him by his creator, Dr. Thomas Light.

Look at this outfit! They don't call him the Blue Bomber for nothing. It's not just a fashion choice, though. The limited color palette of the NES had more shades of blue than any other color. This led Capcom to give Mega Man his distinctive hue.

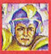
These big boots are ideal for making precise jumps. (Just don't step on any spikes.) They would also be great if Dr. Wily ever tried to take over the world through a series of soccer matches. But that would never happen, right...?

Mega Man's arms convert into the powerful Mega Buster. This handy weapon can charge up to fire a devastating blast, and it's capable of adapting itself to utilize the weapon of a defeated Robot Master.

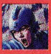
> "I am more than a robot!!"
>
> MEGA MAN 7, SUPER NES, 1995

THE MANY FACES OF MEGA MAN

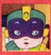
Over the years, Mega Man has been depicted by multiple artists. This has led to some wildly different interpretations of the character. It's enough to give someone an identity crisis!



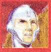
Mega Man
box art (US)



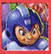
Mega Man
box art (Europe)



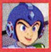
Captain N: The Game Master
animated series



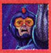
Mega Man 2
box art (Europe)



Mega Man 3
box art (US)



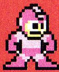
Mega Man
animated series



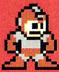
Mega Man 10
main illustration

NOT-JUST-BLUE BOMBER

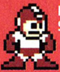
Even though Mega Man is known for his iconic blue attire, the color of his outfit changes whenever he equips a new weapon. In fact, one of the titles that was considered for the original Mega Man was Rainbow Battle Kid.



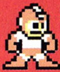
Quick Boomerang



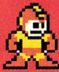
Commando Bomb



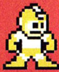
Power Stone



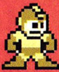
Crash Bomber



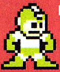
Atomic Fire



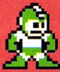
Hornet Chaser



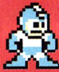
Ring Boomerang



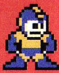
Rain Flush



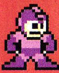
Search Snake



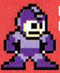
Gemini Laser



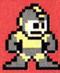
Napalm Bomb



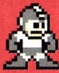
Rebound Striker



Black Hole Bomb



Thunder Beam



Wind Storm

COLLECTOR'S CORNER

SERIOUSLY COOL STUFF FOR SERIOUS NINTENDO FANS

All-Star Autos

These Hot Wheels-sized racers from Sonic and Sega All-Stars Racing are cute and collectible.

Robot Parade

A dream collection for any Mega Man fan, this 11-figure set includes several iterations of the Blue Bomber, plus his pals and various enemies.

PHOTOGRAPHS BY MARK MADEO

GAME FORECAST

Wii

Beastly Frantic Foto	Storm City	Q1 11
Captain America: Super Soldier	Sega	2011
Cartoon Network*	Crave	HOL
Conduit 2	Sega	2/11
de Blob: The Underground	THQ	SPR 11
Driver San Francisco	Ubisoft	2011
Enclave: Shadows of Twilight	TopWare	2010
Epic Mickey	Disney	11/10
Green Lantern: Rise of the Manhunters	Warner Bros.	Q3 11
The Grinder	TBA	TBA
Hard Grip: The Climbing Game	TBA	TBA
The Legend of Zelda: Skyward Sword	Nintendo	2011
LEGO Star Wars III: The Clone Wars	LucasArts	2011
Lost in Shadow	Hudson	1/11
Man vs. Wild	Crave	3/11
Mario Sports Mix	Nintendo	2011
NASCAR The Game 2011	Activision	2/11
NCIS	Ubisoft	2011
Pyroblazer	TBA	TBA
Rock of the Dead	Conspiracy	TBA
Sky Pirates of Neo Terra	Aspyr	TBA
SpongeBob SquarePants*	THQ	TBA
Stratusphere	TBA	TBA
Super Mario All-Stars	Nintendo	12/10
Thor: The Video Game	Sega	2011
Top Spin 4	2K Sports	2011
TRON: Evolution—Battle Grids	Disney	12/10
Worms: Battle Islands	THQ	11/10
WWE All Stars	THQ	2011
Yogi Bear: The Video Game	D3Publisher	12/10

NINTENDO DS

Beastly Frantic Foto	Storm City	Q1 11
Captain America: Super Soldier	Sega	2011
de Blob: The Underground	THQ	SPR 11
Disciples II	Strategy First	TBA
Doodle Hex	TBA	TBA
Dragon Quest VI: Realms of Reverie	Square Enix	TBA
Duke Nukem Trilogy: Chain Reaction	Deep Silver	TBA
Duke Nukem Trilogy: Critical Mass	Deep Silver	TBA
Duke Nukem Trilogy: Proving Grounds	Deep Silver	TBA
Gabrielle's Ghostly Groove	Natsume	Q4 10
Ghost Trick: Phantom Detective	Capcom	2011
Ghostwire: Link to the Paranormal	TBA	TBA
Green Lantern: Rise of the Manhunters	Warner Bros.	Q3 11
Kingdom Hearts Re:coded	Square Enix	1/11
LEGO Star Wars III: The Clone Wars	LucasArts	2011
Monster Tale	Majesco	3/11
NCIS	Ubisoft	2011
Okamiden	Capcom	3/11
Pirate Battle	Orbital Media	TBA
Plants vs. Zombies	PopCap	1/11
Pokémon Black Version	Nintendo	SPR 11
Pokémon White Version	Nintendo	SPR 11
Silly Bandz	Zoo	12/10
Thor: The Video Game	Sega	2011
TouchMaster Connect	Warner Bros.	HOL 10
TRON: Evolution	Disney	12/11
Worms: Battle Islands	THQ	11/10
Yogi Bear: The Video Game	D3Publisher	12/10

NINTENDO 3DS

Animal Crossing*	Nintendo	TBA
Asphalt GT	Gameloft	TBA
Assassin's Creed Lost Legacy	Ubisoft	TBA
Baseball*	Konami	TBA
Batman*	Warner Bros.	TBA
Battle of Giants: Dinosaur Strike	Ubisoft	TBA
BloodRayne: The Shroud	Majesco	TBA
Bokujyoumonogatari 3D*	Marvelous	TBA
Bomberman*	Hudson	TBA
A Boy and His Blob	Majesco	TBA
Carnival Games*	Take-Two	TBA
Cartoon Network*	Crave	TBA
Chocobo Racing 3D*	Square Enix	TBA
Contra*	Konami	TBA
Crash-City GP	Rocket	TBA
cubic ninja	AQ	TBA
de Blob 2	THQ	TBA
Dead or Alive Dimensions	Tecmo Koei	TBA
Deca Sports*	Hudson	TBA
DJ Hero 3D	Activision	TBA
Dragon Ball*	Namco Bandai	TBA
Dragon Quest*	Square Enix	TBA
Driver Renegade	Ubisoft	TBA
Dynasty Warriors*	Tecmo Koei	TBA
Etrian Odyssey*	Atlus	TBA
Face Racers: Photo Finish	Majesco	TBA
FIFA Soccer*	Electronic Arts	TBA
Final Fantasy*	Square Enix	TBA
Frogger*	Konami	TBA
Gundam*	Namco Bandai	TBA
Hollywood '61*	Ubisoft	TBA
Kid Icarus: Uprising	Nintendo	TBA
Kingdom Hearts 3DS*	Square Enix	TBA
Kororinpa*	Hudson	TBA
Kung Fu Panda Kaboom of Doom	THQ	TBA
The Legend of Zelda: Ocarina of Time 3D	Nintendo	TBA
LEGO*	Warner Bros.	TBA
Lion's Pride: Adventures in the Serengeti	Majesco	TBA
Lovely Lisa 3D	Tomy	TBA
Madden NFL Football	Electronic Arts	TBA
Mario Kart*	Nintendo	TBA
Martha Stewart	Majesco	TBA
Marvel Super Hero Squad: The Infinity Gauntlet	THQ	TBA
Mega Man Legends 3	Capcom	TBA
Metal Gear Solid 3: Snake Eater	Konami	TBA
My Garden	Electronic Arts	TBA
Naruto Shippuden Action	Tomy	TBA
Ninja Gaiden*	Tecmo Koei	TBA
Nintendogs + Cats	Nintendo	TBA
Pac-Man & Galaga*	Namco Bandai	TBA
Paper Mario*	Nintendo	TBA
The Penguins of Madagascar	THQ	TBA
PilotWings Resort	Nintendo	TBA
Pro Evolution Soccer*	Konami	TBA
Professor Layton and the Mask of Miracle*	Level-5	TBA
Puss N Boots	THQ	TBA
Resident Evil: The Mercenaries 3D	Capcom	TBA
Resident Evil Revelations	Capcom	TBA
Ridge Racer*	Namco Bandai	TBA
Saints Row: Drive-By	THQ	TBA
Samurai Warriors 3D*	Tecmo Koei	TBA
Shin Megami Tensei*	Atlus	TBA
Shin Megami Tensei: Devil Survivor*	Atlus	TBA
Shin Megami Tensei: Persona*	Atlus	TBA
The Sims 3	Electronic Arts	TBA
Sonic*	Sega	TBA
SpongeBob SquarePants*	THQ	TBA
Star Fox 64 3D	Nintendo	TBA
Steel Diver	Nintendo	TBA
Super Monkey Ball*	Sega	TBA
Super Robot*	Namco Bandai	TBA
Super Street Fighter IV 3D Edition*	Capcom	TBA
Tom Clancy's Ghost Recon	Ubisoft	TBA
Tom Clancy's Splinter Cell: Chaos Theory	Ubisoft	TBA
VS-robo	Rocket	TBA
WonderWorld Amusement Park	Majesco	TBA

RED TEXT = TITLES ADDED THIS MONTH.

* TENTATIVE TITLE

NOTE: RELEASE DATES OFTEN CHANGE.

READERS' MOST WANTED

Vote for your favorites at www.nintendopower.com/polls

Wii

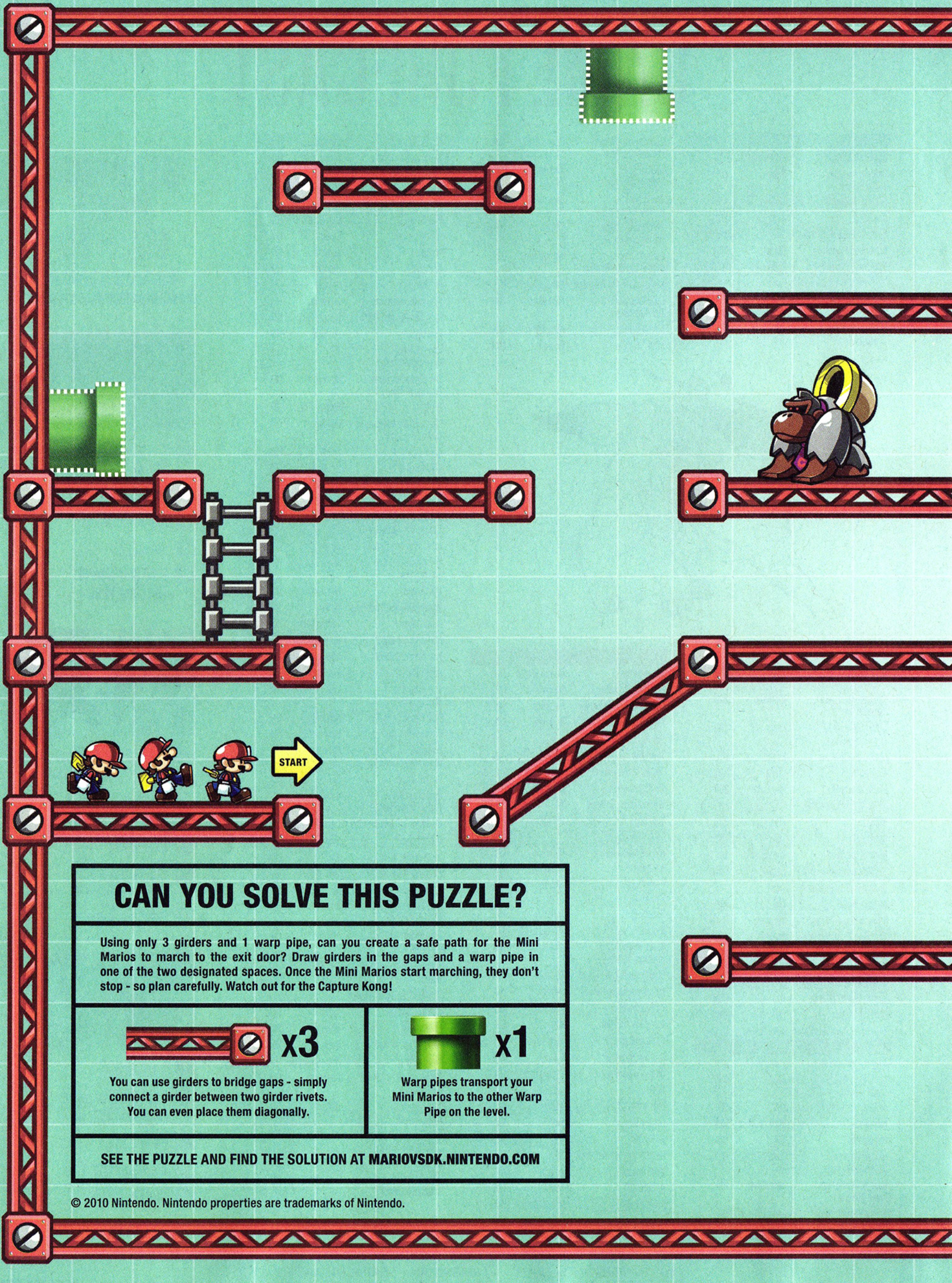
1. The Legend of Zelda: Skyward Sword
2. Epic Mickey
3. Mario Sports Mix
4. Conduit 2
5. LEGO Star Wars III: The Clone Wars

NINTENDO DS

1. Pokémon Black Version/Pokémon White Version
2. Kingdom Hearts Re:coded
3. Okamiden
4. Dragon Quest VI: Realms of Reverie
5. Plants vs. Zombies

NINTENDO 3DS

1. Paper Mario*
2. The Legend of Zelda: Ocarina of Time 3D
3. Mario Kart*
4. Kid Icarus: Uprising
5. Star Fox 64 3D



CAN YOU SOLVE THIS PUZZLE?

Using only 3 girders and 1 warp pipe, can you create a safe path for the Mini Marios to march to the exit door? Draw girders in the gaps and a warp pipe in one of the two designated spaces. Once the Mini Marios start marching, they don't stop - so plan carefully. Watch out for the Capture Kong!

You can use girders to bridge gaps - simply connect a girder between two girder rivets. You can even place them diagonally.

Warp pipes transport your Mini Marios to the other Warp Pipe on the level.

SEE THE PUZZLE AND FIND THE SOLUTION AT MARIOVSDK.NINTENDO.COM

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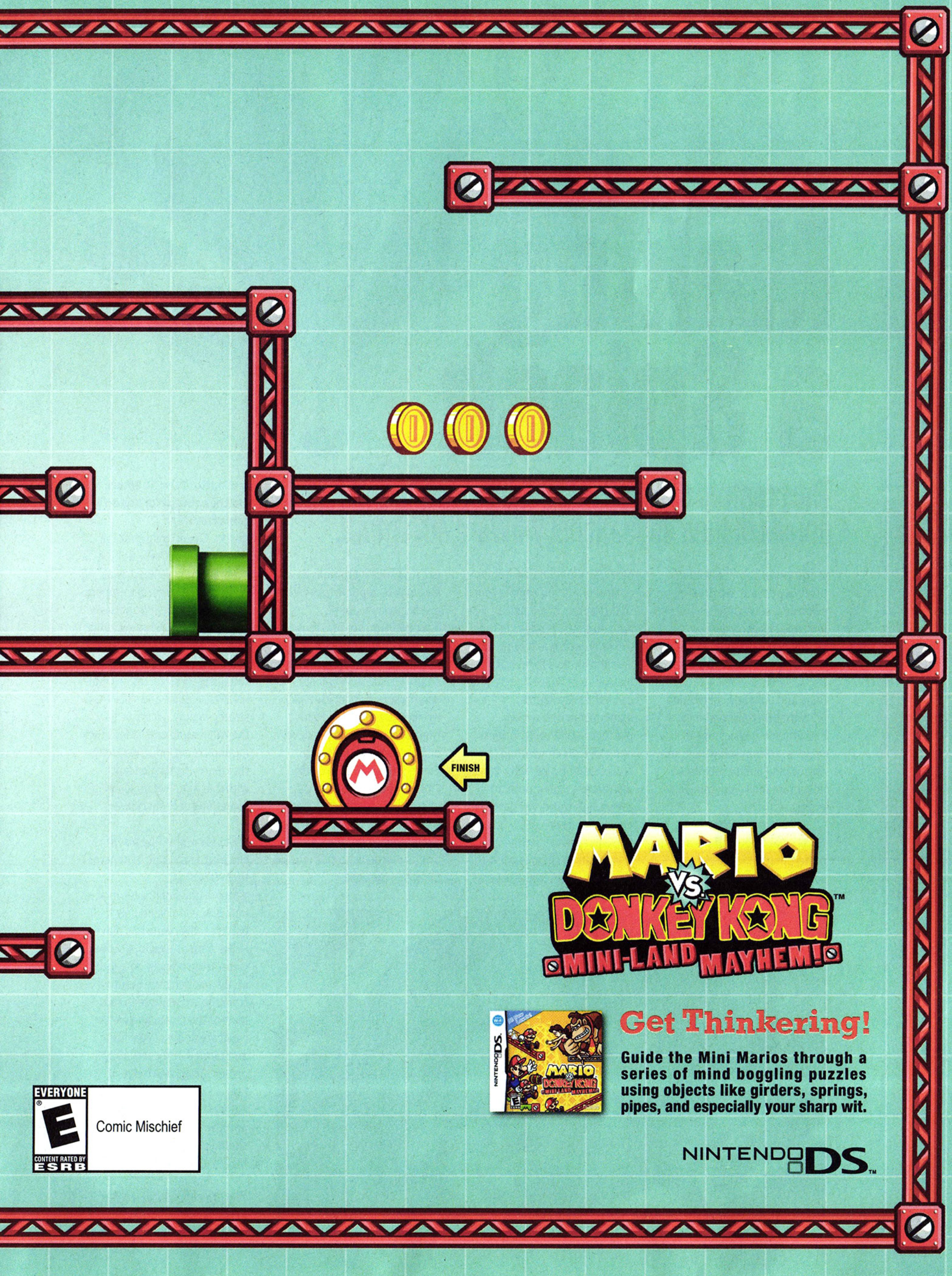
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WiiWARE INTERVIEW
Fluidity
DSiWARE STRATEGY
Shantae: Risky's Revenge
WiiWARE PREVIEW
Descent

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ASTRO BUGZ REVENGE
RACERS' ISLANDS—CRAZY RACERS
TARGET TOSS PRO: LAWN DARTS
TRIPLE JUMPING SPORTS

VIRTUAL CONSOLE REVIEWS
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G.G. SERIES SUPER HERO OGRE
IVY THE KIWI? MINI
RUMMIKUB
SHANTAE: RISKY'S REVENGE
SNAPDOTS
ZENONIA

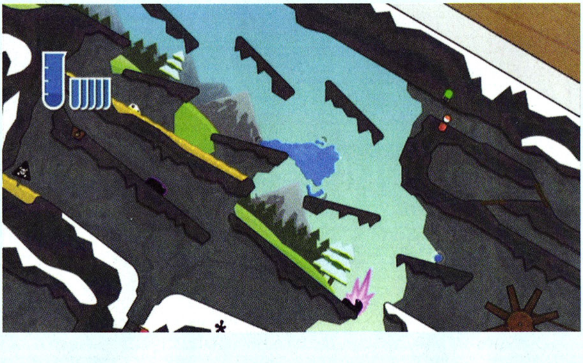
Making a Splash

The creators of Fluidity spill the behind-the-scenes details of their sensational WiiWare adventure.

IF YOU THINK about it, water is pretty awesome. We drink it, swim in it, cook with it, bathe in it, and spray our friends with it. Without water, there would be no life on Earth. Nor would there be Fluidity, a deep and uniquely captivating WiiWare title that combines exploration, physics-based puzzles, storybook visuals, and an evolving ability set into an adventure unlike anything else out there.

Instead of controlling a traditional video game hero or heroine, in Fluidity you control water itself, which you direct by tilting the Wii Remote controller. As you explore four vast chapters of a magical book to clean its pages of the evil Influence, you'll use your versatile puddle to operate machines, activate switches, carry floating objects, maneuver across tricky platforms, ride contraptions, and more. By completing tasks and obtaining new skills, you'll gain access to new parts of the game's world; the game is absolutely massive. Eventually you'll even learn to transform into ice and a cloud, each with their own abilities and uses (such as sticking to walls as an ice block or zapping foes with electricity as a cloud).

With the power of water at your command, the possibilities of Fluidity are nearly limitless. To find out where those possibilities lead, we recently conversed with a representative from the development team at UK-based Curve Studios (who created Fluidity with the assistance of publisher Nintendo). Read on to learn more about the game, its origins, and what awaits players who dive into its depths. **—CHRIS H.**



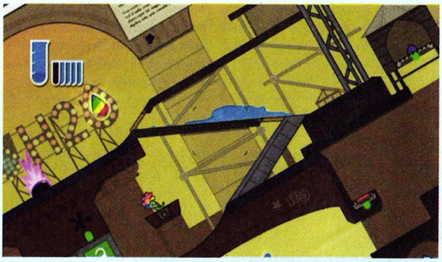
NINTENDO POWER Where did the concept for Fluidity come from?

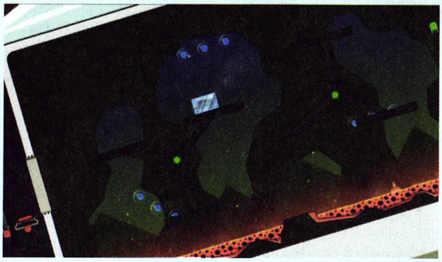
CURVE The original concept was something that was kicking around Curve as early as 2005. One of our programmers came up with the idea of basing a game around interacting with multiple bodies of water and using temperature to change their state. His original idea was a point-and-click PC strategy game. When we saw the Wii Remote and its intuitive motion-based input, we knew that marrying the concept with that input would result in something very special.

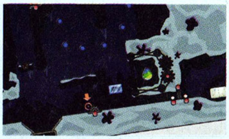
What is compelling about the play mechanic of controlling water?

Water is universal; everybody knows what it is and how it behaves. Everyone has played in the bath as a child, pouring water from one cup to another. By matching the input from the Wii Remote to the level of the landscape we've replicated part of real life and tapped into everybody's pre-existing knowledge. It feels very natural because it is natural. Making water splash, pour, and flow exactly as it should is a very satisfying and tactile experience.

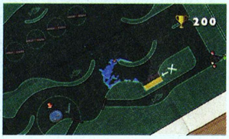
The idea of a water-based action-puzzle game seems







[Below] Go for the high score in the unlockable Playroom levels.



like a fairly natural idea. But marrying it to a nonlinear world with adventure elements comes across as much more ambitious. Why did you choose this type of structure, and what does it add to the game?
In truth, that structure wasn't in the game design at the beginning. Early versions had shorter, more linear levels, with the player starting at one point and ending up at another. The problem with these early levels was that they weren't very satisfying: we had developed some very interesting interactions for the player to partake in, but we hadn't given the player enough choice with which to express themselves. Their goal was always to continue onwards. This also resulted in the levels not being interesting to replay.

We consulted with Nintendo to discuss solutions to this problem, and one that came up was the idea of moving to a much larger nonlinear game environment. This type of structure would provide a constant flow of new and interesting choices for the player, allowing them to decide where they wanted to go and what they wanted to do next. We could also open up new areas of exploration as the game progressed and new abilities were awarded, keeping that element of choice open.

Naturally, going from being a linear, level-based game to an open-world game during development is a big change that required a lot of work, but Nintendo knew it would result in a much better game and so supported us all of the way.

Were there any other games that served as inspiration for Fluidity's design?
The most important games we looked to were the classic Nintendo games, predominantly Metroid and Super Mario 64. This was the first time we'd worked with Nintendo and we were very excited about it. We really wanted to make a very Nintendolike title, and so [we] referenced the very best of their first-party titles.

We looked at Metroid mainly for its exploratory aspects—the way it gradually revealed the world to the player from only a small initial area and gradually opened itself up with a steady flow of interesting new abilities. Metroid always hinted at areas out of your reach, places you knew that you'd be able to access later in the game. We really tried to get across that same feeling of exploration and discovery in Fluidity.

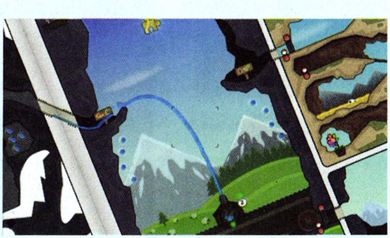
Super Mario 64 was instrumental in showing us how a nonlinear game should reward and motivate players. Fluidity is divided into discrete tasks, for which the player is awarded a Rainbow Drop. The Rainbow Drops are our currency in the game, and the more the player collects, the more the game opens up.

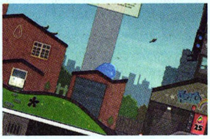
You can see the influence of these two games quite strongly in the final version of Fluidity, and we feel it helps the game feel very Nintendolike.

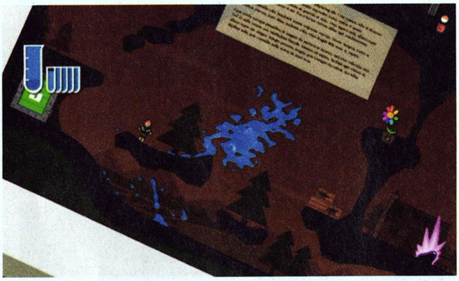
What are the developmental challenges of having water as the main character rather than some sort of being?
This was the source of a lot of problems for us. When you have a single character, you know that they can only be in one place at a time. You can then set the camera accordingly, and use their position to enable buttons presses, trigger scripted sequences, and so on.

Water, on the other hand, can be in many places at once! In Fluidity, you can place your water on two or more switches, pour only half of your water into an area and then move the other half in a totally different direction, or simply spread your water all over the screen! It took us a lot of hard work to come up with systems to cope with this, but we feel we did a great job in the end.

The Fluidity team, composed of members of both Curve and Nintendo. Front row (L-R): Azusa Tajima (Nintendo), Graham Denney. Middle row (L-R): Jonathan Biddle, Paul Hodge, Tom Bolton, Davide Coppola, Alex May, Jaid Mindang. Back row (L-R): Michael Michael, Steve Pearce, Gaz Thomas, Martin Fermor, Masakazu Miyazaki (Nintendo), Russell Kerrison, Jonathan Stoller, Matt Bell, Ben Cooper.







How do you deal with some of the inherent frustration that might come from controlling something as temperamental as water?
We spent a lot of time experimenting with the shape of the landscape to find the layouts that would best keep the water together. It took quite a while, but we did find a series of shapes that really helped the gameplay. However, it's impossible to get the water to stay together purely through layout unless the player is very experienced at the game, so we implemented the ability to pull the water together by holding down a button—we call it the "gather." This helped relieve any moment-to-moment frustration that beginners were having and also created some interesting gameplay mechanics.

What has the collaborative process been like between Nintendo and Curve?
It's been fantastic—and we're not just saying that! As mentioned previously, it's been a long-held dream of ours to work with Nintendo, and we couldn't have asked for a better relationship. Nintendo gave us amazingly detailed feedback about all sorts of issues, and supported us when we wanted to make drastic changes, because they knew that it would result in a better game—that's been the focus every step of the way. We really wanted to impress Nintendo, so everybody on the team really put their all into it, and that's definitely tangible when you play the game.

What was your philosophy for puzzles in the game?
One of the main things we were interested in getting into our puzzle design is variety. With all of the mechanics open to us, we knew that we could offer some very different puzzles just by tweaking certain elements. Some involve having to think quickly, some rely on dexterity, and there are a number of navigational-based puzzles.

The aspect most common to the puzzles was the use of the three water states. Since each state has different abilities and special powers, many actions can only be undertaken in one state. A key aspect of our puzzles is in figuring out which of the states is needed to accomplish a task. We've also been slightly evil in some areas: you'll get to what you think is the end of a puzzle, but we've snuck a little surprise in to confound you.

Is there any reason you chose for the game to be set in the pages of a book?
Originally, we envisioned the game to have a style similar to a safety information card that you might find on an airplane. This clean, simple diagrammatic style was something that really intrigued us. Over time it softened somewhat, and it naturally seemed to morph into a picture-book format. We quickly realized that it would provide the excuse we were looking for to visually break the game into bite-size rooms, which are the individual panels on the pages of the book.

We've played the game for a couple of hours and feel like we've barely scratched the surface. How expansive is it, and how many Rainbow Drops are there to collect?
The game is split into large four chapters, each containing lots of different tasks. There's over 80 rainbow drops in total—some are [awarded] for solving puzzles, some require insane feats of skill to get to, and some are hidden away to reward players who like to explore. We wanted to make sure that there are always plenty of things to do, and that you're not just limited to one option, so sometimes it's fun just to wander round and see what you can find. You don't have to collect every Rainbow Drop to complete the game, but there's plenty of incentive to keep playing and find some of the things you might have missed.

For gamers who want to experience everything Fluidity has to offer, what kind of side quests and optional tasks are there?
In addition to the 80 Rainbow Drops, there are also puzzle pieces hidden around the pages. These unlock the game's four Playrooms, which are horribly addictive skill-based challenge games that you'll want to go back to and improve your score on. Plus, there are a few secret little minigames hidden in the levels, but we'll leave them for you to find.

What was your general approach to the "boss" areas?
The boss areas gave us a chance to change the focus of the gameplay. Instead of solving tricky puzzles, we ask the player to clear an area of The Influence, or in other words, to be more aggressive. Having such a definite task to perform is a really enjoyable change of pace and hunting down every enemy in the zone proves a satisfying punctuation to the chapter. You really feel like you're cleansing the book of The Influence. We've also structured these boss rooms to push the player's knowledge of the new abilities that have been introduced in the chapter, so you're really going to be tested in some areas!

What are the benefits of returning to previous chapters even after you've beaten the "boss"?
As we said before, Metroid was a great influence for us. When we switched to an open-world style, we wanted to incorporate a touch of that flavor to Fluidity. So, by progressing through the game you'll continue to amass a range of abilities, and returning to previously completed chapters will give you opportunities to use those new abilities to reach areas and Rainbow Drops that were inaccessible the first time through. The only way to get the full 80 is by using the full range of abilities through all of the areas, so there's a great amount to do for the completists out there.

Is there anything else you'd like to say about Fluidity?
We're really happy that we were able develop this game for Wii, which is a completely natural fit for Fluidity in terms of input mechanisms and overall style. Nintendo has encouraged us every step of the way, allowing us room to pursue our own ideas while providing invaluable feedback, without which Fluidity wouldn't be the same game. We're immensely proud of Fluidity, and we really hope that everyone has as much fun playing it as we did making it.

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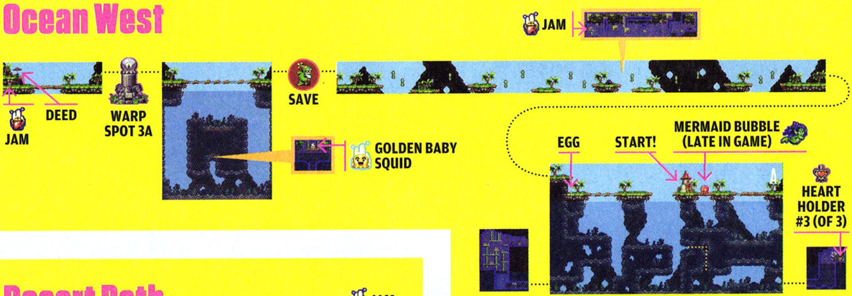
Revenge Is Sweet

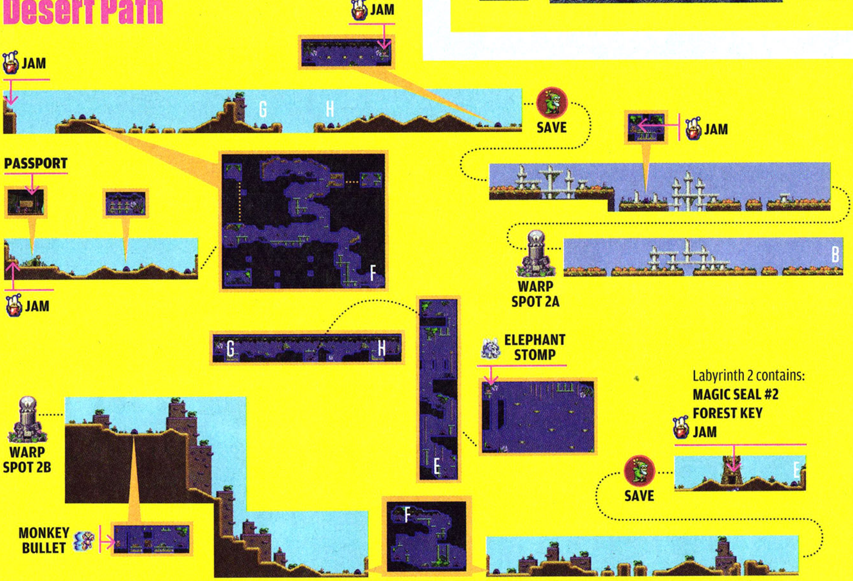
Need a hand finding the secrets of Shantae: Risky's Revenge for DSiWare? This map will tell you everything you need to know.

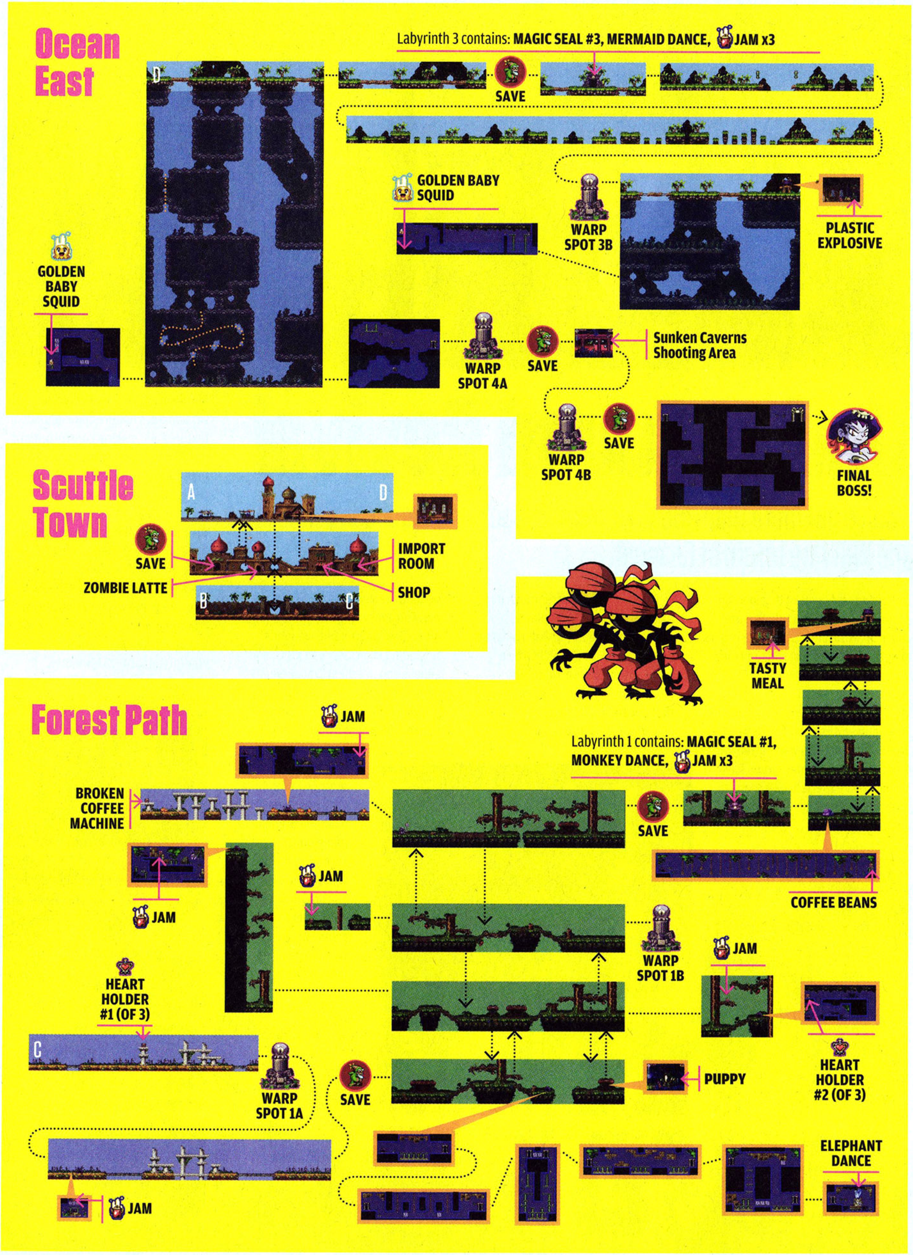
SHANTAE, THE HALF-GENIE heroine of Shantae: Risky's Revenge, has a heck of a task ahead of her. She has to explore a vast world, overcome countless enemies, make her way through treacherous labyrinths, and acquire three magic seals, all while being on the lookout for secret passages and hidden power-ups in one of the biggest DSiWare adventures out there. Luckily, she doesn't have to do it empty-handed. Thanks to this handy map, you'll be able to help her find every important item and crucial location she'll need to visit on the journey. (And if you're still trying to decide whether or not you should get the game, check out the review on page 39.) —**CHRIS H.**

Ocean West


JAM
DEED
JAM
WARP SPOT 3A
SAVE
GOLDEN BABY SQUID
EGG
START!
MERMAID BUBBLE (LATE IN GAME)
A
HEART HOLDER #3 (OF 3)

Desert Path


JAM
JAM
G
H
SAVE
JAM
PASSPORT
F
JAM
B
WARP SPOT 2A
G
H
ELEPHANT STOMP
E
WARP SPOT 2B
MONKEY BULLET
F
Labyrinth 2 contains:
MAGIC SEAL #2
FOREST KEY
JAM
SAVE
E



Ocean East

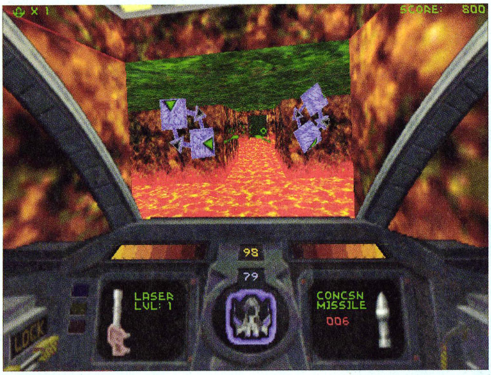
Labyrinth 3 contains: MAGIC SEAL #3, MERMAID DANCE, JAM x3
D
SAVE
GOLDEN BABY SQUID
WARP SPOT 3B
PLASTIC EXPLOSIVE
GOLDEN BABY SQUID
WARP SPOT 4A
SAVE
Sunken Caverns Shooting Area
WARP SPOT 4B
SAVE
FINAL BOSS!

Scuttle Town

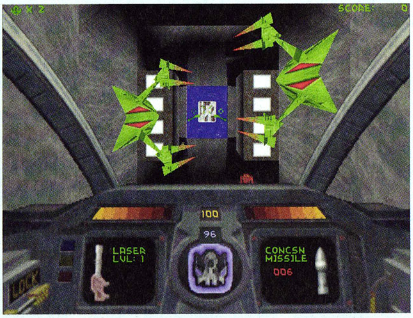
A
D
SAVE
IMPORT ROOM
ZOMBIE LATTE
SHOP
B
C

Forest Path

JAM
BROKEN COFFEE MACHINE
Labyrinth 1 contains: MAGIC SEAL #1, MONKEY DANCE, JAM x3
SAVE
TASTY MEAL
COFFEE BEANS
JAM
JAM
WARP SPOT 1B
JAM
HEART HOLDER #1 (OF 3)
C
WARP SPOT 1A
SAVE
PUPPY
HEART HOLDER #2 (OF 3)
ELEPHANT DANCE
JAM



The graphics may show their age, but that doesn't change the fact that Descent is one of the most acclaimed first-person shooters ever.



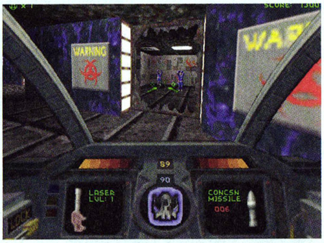
Underground Revival

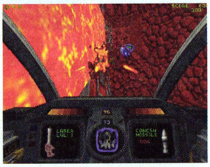
You've got more than 360 degrees of firepower at your command in the WiiWare return of Descent.

IN THE 1990S, a lot of first-person shooters were trying to make their mark on PC. Some succeeded; others didn't. But one that stood out from the crowd was Descent—an FPS that put you in the cockpit of a ship that provided 360 degrees of movement in whatever direction you desired. Now—more than 15 years after the release of the original—you'll have a chance to experience Descent all over again when the game makes its way to WiiWare.

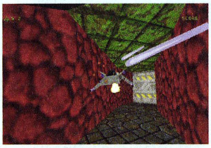
Descent doesn't offer much in the way of a story. You play as a mercenary hired by an intergalactic mining corporation to destroy a bunch of out-of-control robots infected by a computer virus. But that doesn't really matter—it's just an excuse to fly into the mines beneath each planet's surface and blow up everything that moves with an arsenal of 20-some weapons (including lasers, spread guns, and concussion missiles). Of course, the game isn't just about shooting; there are keycards to find and hostages to rescue, and there's plenty to explore in the labyrinthine levels. There are more than 65 stages in all, taken not only from the original game but also from several of its expansion packs.

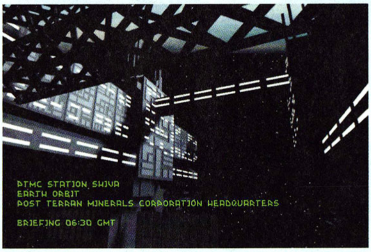
Though Descent stays true to its roots—meaning that it retains its old-school visuals for the most part—the WiiWare version does feature some enhanced textures and several control options, including the ability to use the Wii Remote and Nunchuk controllers (either with or without the Wii MotionPlus accessory) and the Classic Controller. The developers are even considering getting the Wii Balance Board involved. The WiiWare release of Descent marks the first time the game will be available on a Nintendo platform, so if you're a fan of vintage FPS action, you won't want to miss out. **—CHRIS H.**





[Above] Is that pool of magma on the wall or on the floor? In Descent, it doesn't matter!





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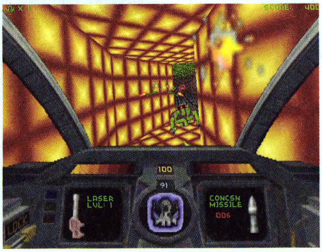

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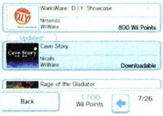
MOVIES—YES! DISCS—NO!

Nintendo's partnership with movie-distribution service Netflix came to fruition in early 2010, but the downloadable Netflix channel became a reality only recently. The channel (which is available from the Wii Channels section of the Wii Shop Channel) is available for free, and it allows Netflix subscribers to stream movies and TV shows to the Wii console without having to use the previously required Wii disc. Netflix subscription plans start at $8.99 per month.

REINFORCING THE CAVE

Publisher Nicalis has just given gamers one more reason to download the fantastic adventure game Cave Story for WiiWare. An updated version of the game, now available through the Wii Shop Channel, features improved audio (for both music and sound effects), menu transparencies, GameCube controller compatibility, a secret sound test, and several behind-the-scenes fixes. (On the other hand, the game's bonus modes now have to be unlocked by playing through Story mode.) If you already own Cave Story you can get the update for free, and newcomers can download the game for its original asking price of 1,200 Wii Points.



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Cave Story
Nicalis
WiiWare
Downloadable

Rage of the Gladiator

EVALUATION STATION

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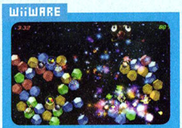


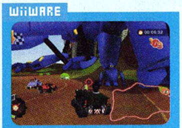
ASTRO BUGZ REVENGE

PUBLISHER: **SUDDEN GAMES**
GENRE: **PUZZLE**
Wii POINTS: **700**

If you've been searching for a game that combines Bust-a-Move and Space Invaders, look no further. However, if you're expecting much more than that, Astro Bugz Revenge is not the game for you. Although it includes 100 levels between two modes, the gameplay becomes quite stale and repetitive after a few rounds. The concept is mildly interesting, but it's a time-waster game at best. —**CODY M.**

Hmmm...

WiiWARE



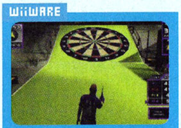
RACERS' ISLANDS—CRAZY RACERS

PUBLISHER: **ZALLAG**
GENRE: **RACING**
Wii POINTS: **1,000**

The title isn't the only thing that's awkward about this half-baked kart racer. It also features oversensitive steering controls, dull weapons, boring courses, and ugly graphics. There is one clever gimmick: in addition to the special items, you can aim and fire a pea-shooter-type weapon with the Wii Remote controller. However, this attack is so ineffective it's not worth the trouble. Just use the 1,000 Nintendo Points to buy Mario Kart 64 on Virtual Console. —**PHIL T.**

Grumble Grumble

WiiWARE



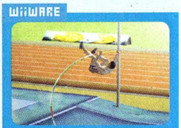
TARGET TOSS PRO: LAWN DARTS

PUBLISHER: **INCREDIBLE TECHNOLOGIES**
GENRE: **SPORTS**
Wii POINTS: **700**

At seven bucks, TTP: Lawn Darts should be (by WiiWare standards) a premium title. On the presentation front it largely delivers, providing a slick "televised" vibe and solid animation. The content is also on point: four games—classic lawn darts, 501, cricket, and lawn poker—and plenty of multiplayer/party potential. Unfortunately, the merely serviceable controls detract, and the game's devotion to a single throwing mechanic grows old quickly. —**PATRICK C.**

Hmmm...

WiiWARE



TRIPLE JUMPING SPORTS

PUBLISHER: **THE CODE MONKEYS**
GENRE: **SPORTS**
Wii POINTS: **500**

The long jump, the high jump, and the pole vault comprise the leaping trio in Triple Jumping Sports. The controls are slightly different in each event, making it feel inconsistent. In the high jump you gesture in a set rhythm to run, whereas you fill a power meter in the others. The moment of the jump is all hit-and-miss timing. It gets your blood pumping but leads to little fanfare and no option to try for a three-event championship. —**GEORGE S.**

Hmmm...

VIRTUAL CONSOLE

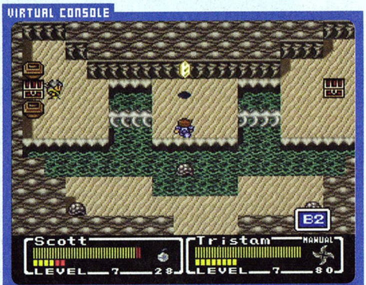
FATAL FURY 3: ROAD TO THE FINAL VICTORY

PLATFORM: **NEOGEO**
PUBLISHER: **D4 ENTERPRISE/SNK**
GENRE: **FIGHTING**
ORIGINAL RELEASE: **1995**

As far as Fatal Fury games go, I like this one well enough. Granted, it's not my favorite entry in the series, but Fatal Fury 3 has a decent roster of characters, and it adds some gameplay features such as the ability to block in midair. However, with so many superior fighting games already available on Virtual Console, I can't say you should purchase this one. —**JUSTIN C.**

Hmmm...

VIRTUAL CONSOLE



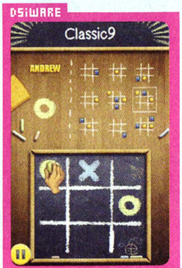
FINAL FANTASY MYSTIC QUEST

PLATFORM: **SUPER NES** PUBLISHER: **SQUARE ENIX**
GENRE: **RPG** ORIGINAL RELEASE: **1992**

I have fond memories of playing Final Fantasy Mystic Quest way back before I knew any better. Designed for RPG neophytes, Mystic Quest distills many of the traditional Final Fantasy elements to their most basic forms, making for a title that's ultimately too simplistic and easy for the modern gamer. Mystic Quest still has its charms, of course; the characters can be funny and the soundtrack is pretty awesome. —**JUSTIN C.**

Hmmm...

DSiWARE



ACADEMY: TIC-TAC-TOE

PUBLISHER: **GAMELION**
GENRE: **BOARD GAME**
NINTENDO DSi POINTS: **200**

Aside from its conspicuous lack of multiplayer, Academy: Tic-Tac-Toe offers a fairly lavish tic-tac-toe experience, including polished graphics, multiple play modes, and league play. Sadly, none of this changes the fact that it's still tic-tac-toe. —**PATRICK C.**

Hmmm...

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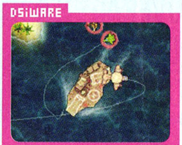


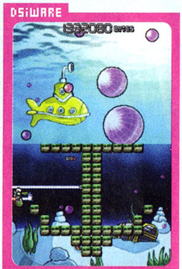
ARMADA

PUBLISHER: **ZOO GAMES**
GENRE: **STRATEGY**
NINTENDO DSi POINTS: **500**

Zoo Games presents a fresh entry in the burgeoning "path tracing" genre. Players juggle swarming aircraft (by tracing flight paths) while guiding them in succession to a limited number of landing zones. (Aircraft can be guided offscreen once they've landed.) The complexity of the routine grows increasingly insane across three difficulty levels. It's good for a quick, casual burst, but the high difficulty and dubious replay value limit the grandeur. —**PATRICK C.**

Hmmm...

DSiWARE



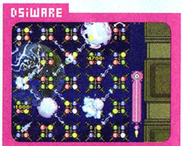
DATAMINE

PUBLISHER: **ENJOY GAMING**
GENRE: **ACTION**
NINTENDO DSi POINTS: **500**

Datamine is a solid clone of the classic game Buster Bros. (AKA Pang). The simple goal—shoot bubbles with your harpoon gun—results in some very enjoyable arcade-style gameplay, and the ability to climb walls adds a fun new twist. With 100 levels, it's also fairly long. —**PHIL T.**

Recommended

DSiWARE



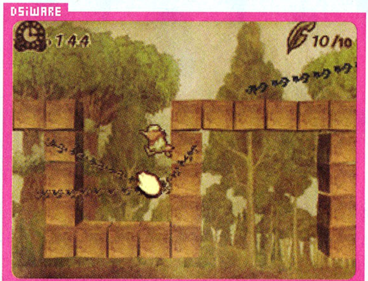
FIZZ

PUBLISHER: **DK-GAMES**
GENRE: **PUZZLE**
NINTENDO DSi POINTS: **200**

Fizz is a puzzle game in which you manipulate little satellites based on their colors to create a loop, all while dealing with aliens, wormholes, and asteroids that either damage your satellites or randomize their color. Unfortunately, the later levels quickly become a frustrating matter of luck: satellites quickly change colors at random, leaving no time to react. And that's no fun at all. —**DAVID M.**

Grumble Grumble

DSiWARE



IVY THE KIWI? MINI

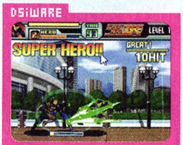
PUBLISHER: **XSEED** GENRE: **PLATFORMER** NINTENDO DSi POINTS: **500**

Steve T's Pick

The DSiWare version of Yuji Naka's charming puzzle-platformer contains all 50 of the main story levels from the retail release, making it one heck of a value for 500 points. (It's missing only the remixed levels and the multiplayer modes of the packaged game.) Each stage has the titular protagonist marching toward a goal, and your job is to lead her there safely by drawing vines via the stylus. It's a simple but addictive concept, skillfully executed. Plans for a WiiWare release have been scrapped, so don't hold out for that version.

Recommended

DSiWARE



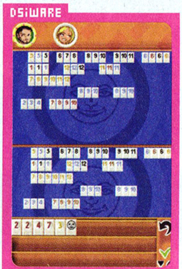
G.G SERIES SUPER HERO OGRE

PUBLISHER: **GENTERPRISE**
GENRE: **ACTION**
NINTENDO DSi POINTS: **200**

Do you like punching dudes in the face? If you play G.G Series Super Hero Ogre, you'd better. This basic 2D beat-'em-up is simply about pounding the heck out of enemies in a small arena using a handful of moves, then trying to defeat the stage boss. The bosses take a measure of skill to defeat, which makes it pretty annoying when you lose and have to defeat all the flunkies before you can challenge the boss again. —**CHRIS H.**

Hmmm...

DSiWARE



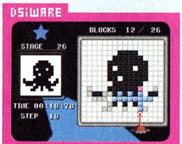
RUMMIKUB

PUBLISHER: **GAMES FACTORY ONLINE**
GENRE: **BOARD GAME**
NINTENDO DSi POINTS: **800**

Rummikub is an excellent tile-based board game that requires plenty of logic and strategy. This electronic version plays great, and it always keeps the easily cluttered board neatly arranged. The computer opponents are suitably challenging, but it's even more fun with friends via wireless play. —**PHIL T.**

Recommended

DSiWARE



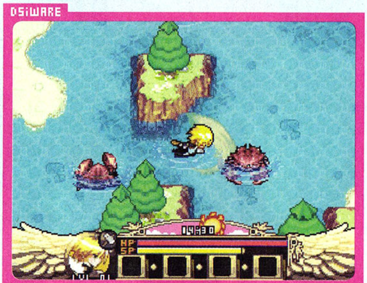
SNAPDOTS

PUBLISHER: **NINTENDO**
GENRE: **PUZZLE**
NINTENDO DSi POINTS: **500**

Quirky philosophy and lightly twisted humor wrap around a clever block-placing puzzler that starts easy but gets tricky in a hurry. The object is to fill the gray spaces of a pixelated pattern by firing blocks from a ship; the challenge is in building structures around free-floating spaces, then removing the excess blocks once the spaces are filled. A character offers commentary and some advice, but leaves you to solve the stumpers on your own. —**GEORGE S.**

Recommended

DSiWARE



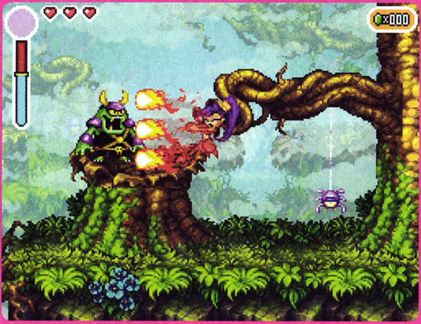
ZENONIA

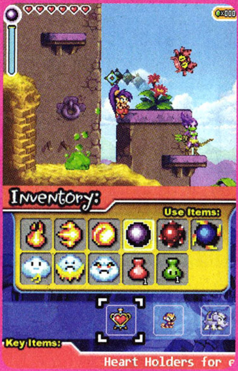
PUBLISHER: **GAMEVIL** GENRE: **ADVENTURE** NINTENDO DSi POINTS: **800**

Action-RPG Zenonia starts off with a young man named Regret who is investigating his father's death. In order to carry out this task, you go on quests, defeat baddies, level up, and grab loot. It might sound like standard fare, but Zenonia stands out thanks to its nice colorful graphics, as well as its hunger (keep yourself fed), weight (ensure you aren't overloaded with knickknacks), and morality (make good or evil choices) systems. These aren't all great—the hunger and weight stuff can get particularly annoying—but they help keep things from getting too monotonous as you progress through this fairly beefy adventure. —**JUSTIN C.**

Recommended

DSiWARE





SHANTAE: RISKY'S REVENGE

PUBLISHER: **WAYFORWARD** GENRE: **ADVENTURE** NINTENDO DSi POINTS: **1,200**

Chris H's Pick

A couple of days after Shantae: Risky's Revenge became available in the Nintendo DSi Shop, I was awakened in the middle of the night by a bunch of things falling off a shelf. My first thought was, "Oh, the giant spiders are back in my apartment." But my second thought was not, "I need to get back to sleep," nor was it, "Better get some bug spray." It was, "Well, since I'm awake, I might as well play some more Shantae: Risky's Revenge!"

That's the kind of game Shantae is—the kind that you don't want to put down or stop playing, and the kind you keep thinking about even when you have other things to do. The game hits all the right buttons—it looks absolutely gorgeous, sounds great, controls flawlessly, and has a delightful sense of humor, plus it's got the same type of nonlinear exploration that's worked so well in Metroid and Castlevania. There are almost always tantalizing treasures and passages just out of reach, and you can't wait to learn the next transformational dance or magic spell or new ability you need so you can return to the area, overcome the obstacle, and reap the rewards. The way the game world opens up over the course of a few hours is incredibly satisfying, but the fantastic design doesn't end there. The game's dungeons are excellent, too—packed with neat puzzles and layouts that present just the right amount of challenge.

My complaints are minimal. The in-game map isn't as useful as it could be, and it felt like there was one boss encounter too few, but what's here is remarkably impressive. My biggest gripe—if you call it that—is that the adventure inevitably comes to an end, and since the game is no longer planned as part of an episodic trilogy, we might have to wait a long time for a sequel. Admittedly, the 1,200 Nintendo DSi Point price tag is a bit steeper than that of most DSiWare titles, but the quality makes the game more than worth it. If you own a Nintendo DSi, Shantae: Risky's Revenge is a must-have.

Recommended

PREVIEWS

IN THIS SECTION

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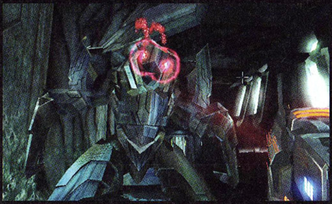
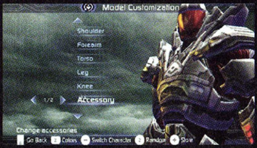
CONDUIT 2

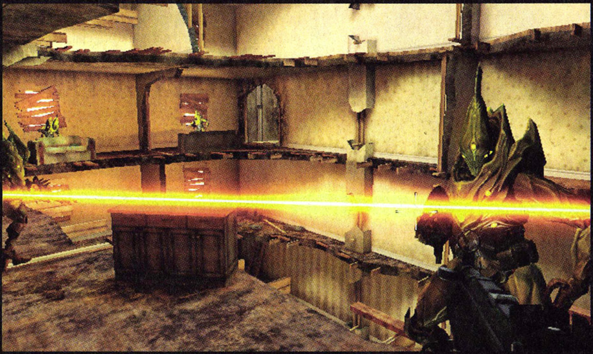
The new and improved Ford

WE'VE GOT SOME good news and some bad news. The bad news is that Sega has pushed back the release of Conduit 2—originally slated for this November—until February 2011. The good news is that the delay affords developer High Voltage Software extra time to really polish this ambitious sequel, and judging by our most recent demo, the end result looks like it'll be worth the wait. (Plus, first-person shooter





[Above] In multiplayer mode, you can customize every aspect of your appearance.



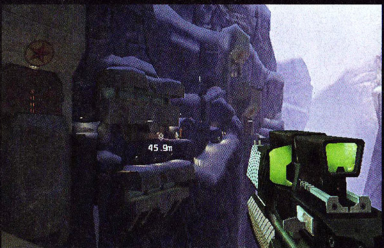
fans can bide their time with the excellent GoldenEye 007—see our review on page 84.)

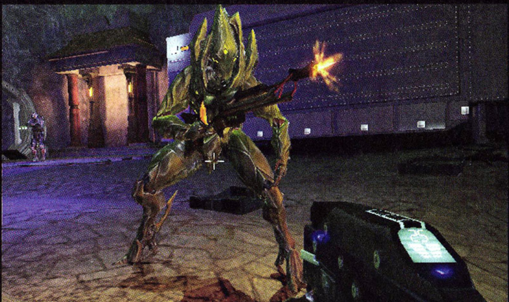
Conduit 2 opens with an impressive CG cinematic that brings players up to speed on the saga's plot and helps set a more theatrical tone than the first installment. From there, the action picks up right after the original game's cliffhanger ending, in which Secret Service agent Michael Ford pursued evil alien mastermind John Adams through a mysterious portal. Said portal drops our returning hero on a massive oil derrick in the middle of the Atlantic Ocean, where he's greeted by a torrential downpour, heavily armed security forces, and one seriously ticked-off sea serpent.

This stage already looked amazing when we first visited it a few months ago, and it's improved noticeably since then. The rainfall covers everything with a convincing sheen, all of the textures hold up remarkably well no matter how close you get, and the sea serpent occasionally pops up to wreak havoc and provide a destructive spectacle. Amidst all this visual pizzazz is some pretty engaging gunplay. As in the first game, you can customize every aspect of the controls to your liking, from button assignments to turning sensitivity. You also have the option to play with the Wii Remote and Nunchuk controllers or the Classic Controller, and Conduit 2 even supports the Wii MotionPlus accessory for smoother scrolling. Better still, it addresses some of its predecessor's biggest shortcomings. Enemy AI is significantly more sophisticated, the levels are less corridor-based, and environments are populated with all sorts of destructible elements and interactive cover. At one point, we saw an opposing soldier knock over a soda machine and duck behind it to avoid our fire. That kind of stuff goes a long way towards keeping the firefights interesting.

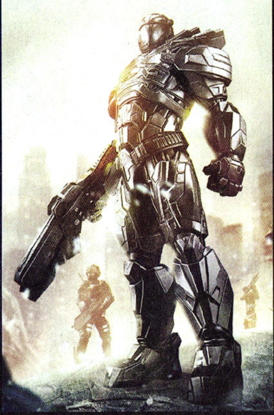
So does the wider variety of settings. Whereas the original Conduit took place entirely in Washington DC, Conduit 2 has you trotting all around the globe—and even to mythical realms. After taking out the aforementioned sea serpent in the game's first boss battle (another new addition), players end up in Atlantis. The famed underwater city turns out to be an alien installation, and serves as a hub for the rest of your travels. (It's also where Ford finds his burly new armor, which looks a bit like that of a certain space-faring chief.)

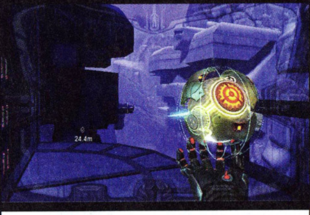
From there our demo took us to a military base built into the snow-capped mountains of Siberia, then to an ancient temple tucked away in a lush Chinese valley. The latter hosts one of the sequel's many new enemy types—the Jade Warrior. These hulking figures appear to be harmless statues at first, but when you approach, they come to life and stalk you relentlessly like a Terminator. Though slow and unarmed, they're extremely difficult to bring down and they pack a mighty wallop. Fortunately, this stage also introduces a new weapon—the Arc Eclipse—that allows you to cloak for short periods of time and avoid Jade Warrior detection. Conduit 2's arsenal has definitely impressed us thus far, combining updates of favorites from the original game with a bevy of imaginative new offerings. One of our favorite additions lets you stop enemy bullets in midair, à la *The*





[Right] The aliens have been redesigned since the first Conduit to make them look more menacing.





[Above] The All-Seeing Eye returns and comes into play more often than it did in the original game.

Matrix, before launching the ordnance back at your foes. Another gun actually fires miniature black holes, which proved especially amusing during the multiplayer portion of our demo.

In addition to the single-player campaign, Conduit 2 will offer online play for up to 12 participants, as well as a 4-player split-screen option. According to High Voltage, virtually all of the multiplayer modes from the first game are back and joined by just as many new selections. The maps will likewise be a mix of new and old, with returning stages determined by fan vote. To lend the festivities a bit of extra depth, the sequel also introduces a currency system. Skillful play will earn you credits that you can use to purchase new weapons and characters, as well as special upgrades like the ability to heal teammates by shooting them. (Don't try that in real life.) Hoping to make the online experience as frustration-free as possible, the developers are putting forth a concerted effort to identify and eliminate potential exploits, and they'll release patches for the game post-release as issues arise.

There is one other bit of bad news: we've got a black hole with your name on it come February. —STEVE T.

Wii
PUBLISHER: **SEGA**
DEVELOPER: **HIGH VOLTAGE SOFTWARE**
RELEASE: **FEBRUARY 2011**

LET YOUR VOICE BE HEARD

Conduit 2 will support PDP's Headbanger Headset for online voice chat. The $25 accessory should be available by the time you read this, and is also compatible with Call of Duty: Black Ops. We had yet to try the headset for ourselves as we went to print, but the folks at High Voltage feel that the quality is comparable to similar products on competing consoles. It's worth noting that, unlike its predecessor, Conduit 2 will not support the Wii Speak peripheral.

COMIC HEROES

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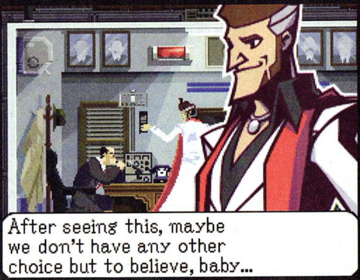
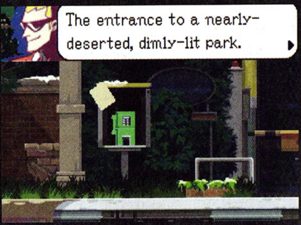


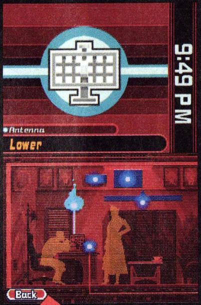
After seeing this, maybe we don't have any other choice but to believe, baby...

[Left] In a game full of quirky characters, Detective Cabanela might be the quirkiest of all.



The entrance to a nearly-deserted, dimly-lit park.

Where's my chicken?



GHOST TRICK: PHANTOM DETECTIVE

You've got better things to do tonight than die!

SOMETHING MYSTERIOUS IS going on in the world of Ghost Trick: Phantom Detective, and Sissel is the only man who can get to the bottom of it. Unfortunately for him, he's dead. And he's lost his memory. And he has only until morning before he fades away into nothingness.

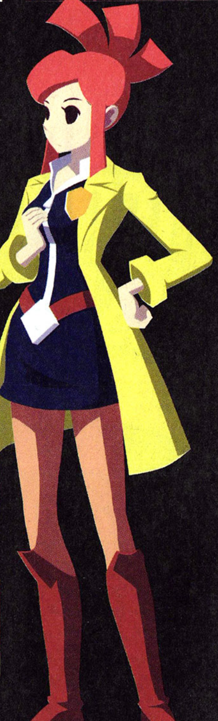
On the bright side, being dead does have its benefits. As a spirit, Sissel can possess inanimate objects—umbrellas, spotlights, fans, bicycles, car doors, TV remotes, nightsticks, books, wads of paper, and much more—and use them to move around and to perform actions (opening a wastebasket lid, for example). He can even travel to distant locations by possessing a telephone. More importantly, if he finds someone who's recently died, Sissel can warp through time to four minutes before that person's death, then manipulate the objects at hand to change the fate of the would-be victim.

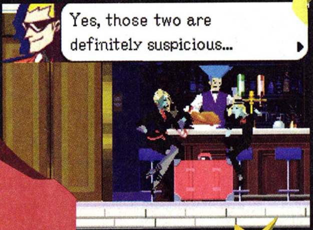
Furthermore, being deceased allows Sissel to hook up with Lynne, a charming police detective who's got problems of her own. Sissel's and Lynne's fates are intertwined; he'll have to save Lynne from an untimely demise on several occasions as he tries to learn about the events that led up to his own death. And Lynne is far from the only character you'll cross paths with. The game is full of eccentric personalities, from a nearsighted gunman to a disco-dancing detective to a junkyard supervisor who wears a pigeon on his head.

As Sissel's quest for the truth unfolds, he'll visit a variety of environments and have numerous opportunities to save the innocent. Even when you're not trying to prevent someone's impending doom, you'll be able to use "ghost trick" powers to listen in on conversations and cause characters to take action on your behalf. With unique point-and-click gameplay, astonishing animation, and a gripping story from the creator of the Ace Attorney series, Ghost Trick has all the makings of a classic.

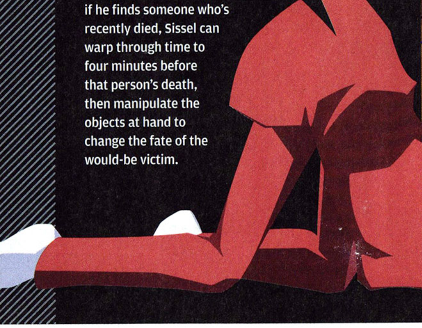
—**CHRIS H.**

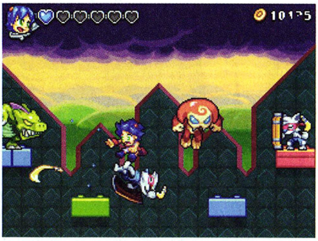
DS PUBLISHER: **CAPCOM**
DEVELOPER: **CAPCOM**
RELEASE: **JANUARY 2011**

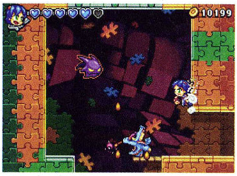




Yes, those two are definitely suspicious...







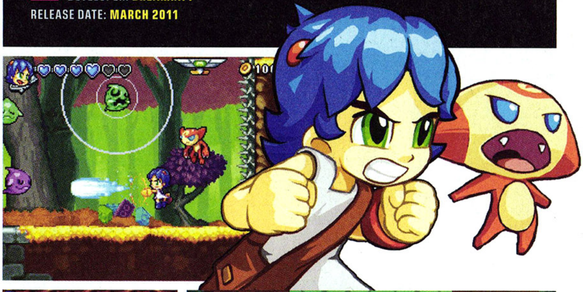
[Left] Chomp starts off small and cute, but he becomes large and a little scary as he levels up.

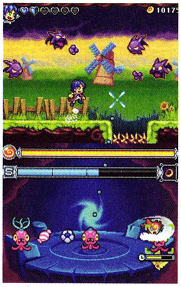
MONSTER TALE

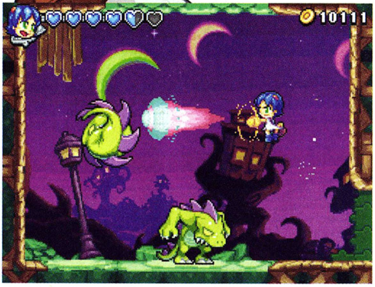
A monster of a friend

For those of you who haven't been following our coverage of Monster Tale—the latest game from the folks who developed Henry Hatsworth in the Puzzling Adventure—here's a refresher. In this action-exploration game, a young girl named Ellie wakes up in a strange land where she encounters baddies as well as a friendly monster hatchling she names Chomp. Ellie's little buddy can attack enemies (which is helpful when facing foes that are outside the range of Ellie's blaster) and hit certain switches to open new pathways. Being out in the open leaves Chomp vulnerable to attackers, however; fortunately, you can send him to the Pet Sanctuary (the Nintendo DS handheld's bottom screen) to heal up. There he can also interact with items such as cookies (to gain experience) and catapults (with which he can bombard adversaries on the top screen). This is just a taste of what Monster Tale has to offer, of course; we'll have a more in-depth look at this exciting title next issue. —**JUSTIN C.**

DS PUBLISHER: **MAJESCO**
DEVELOPER: **DREAMRIFT**
RELEASE DATE: **MARCH 2011**







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ELECTRIFIED
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INVINCIBLE
INSANE
SHINY

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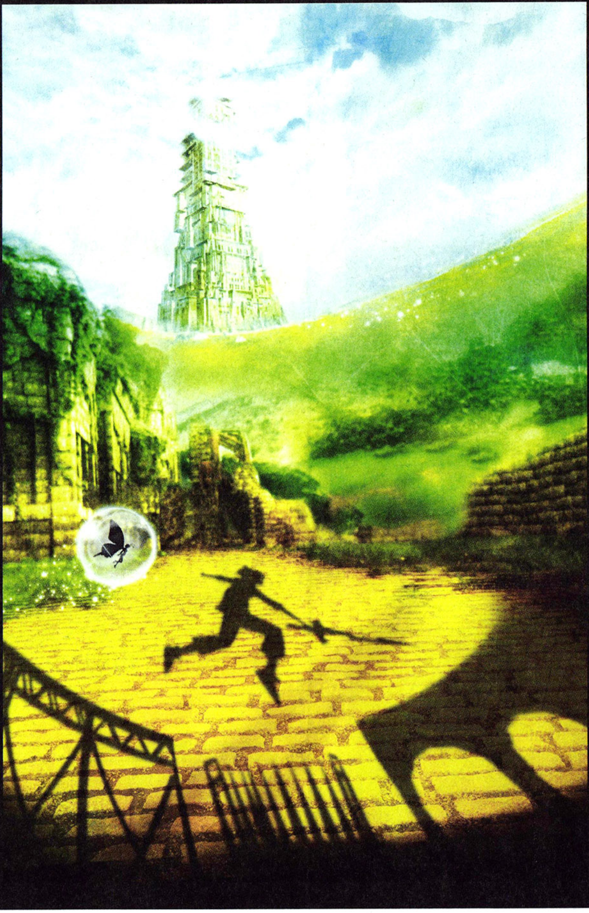
(s10)

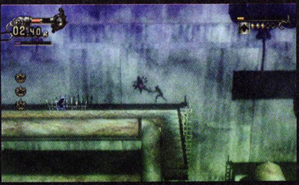
LOST IN SHADOW

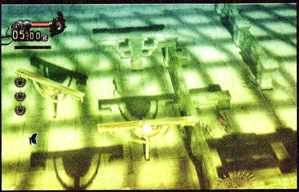
More light is shed on this unique puzzle-platformer.

ONE OF THE most visually distinctive games we've seen, Lost in Shadow is a title we've been excited about for a long time now. After a couple of delays, the game is nearly ready for prime time—as evidenced by a fairly complete-seeming version we got our hands on. Sure, we had played parts of the game before, but this was the first time we'd gotten to experience Lost in Shadow from the very beginning, wherein a boy is being held captive at the top of an enormous tower. A masked man clad in a black cloak uses his sword to separate the shadow from the boy, and then flings the shadow off the tower to the ground below. The fairylike Spangle wakes up the boy's shadow, and the two set off on a quest to scale the tower in order to reunite the shadow with his body.

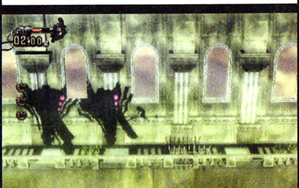
As you are controlling the boy's shadow, you can interact only with other shadows on a 2D plane. This means that the shadow of, say, a wall becomes a floor on which the protagonist can walk, and gaps in the wall become chasms to leap across. While advancing up the tower, you can collect Memories (little clouds that give you hints and increase your health bar) and Monitor Eyes (eyeball-shaped objects with red irises). You can't proceed without finding all three Monitor Eyes and opening the Shadow Wall at the end of each stage, so you have to search high and low, often solving puzzles in the process. Most puzzles are centered on using the Spangle to interact with physical devices; you can rotate structures to create platforms, for example. Or you can manipulate a light source,

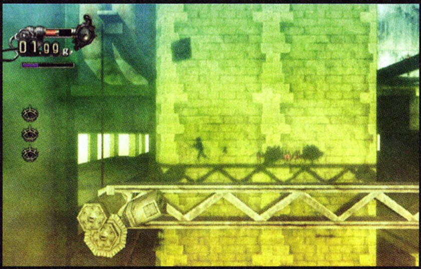


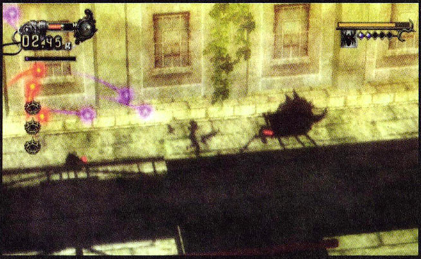


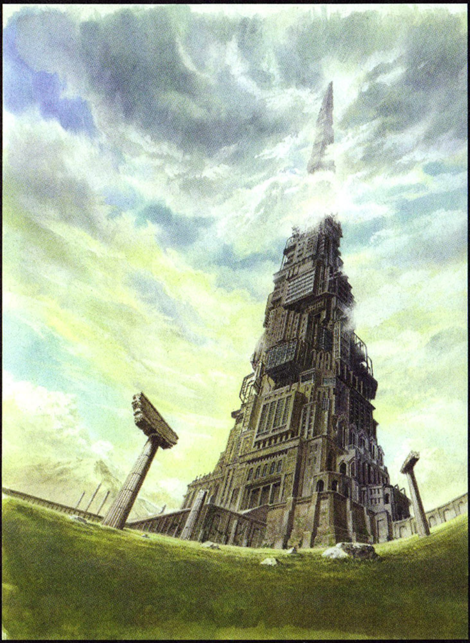


[Above] You can use the Spangle to rotate these devices in order to create platforms. [Below] Some of the baddies are frighteningly big.









[Above] We wish we got health and experience from slaying spiders in real life.

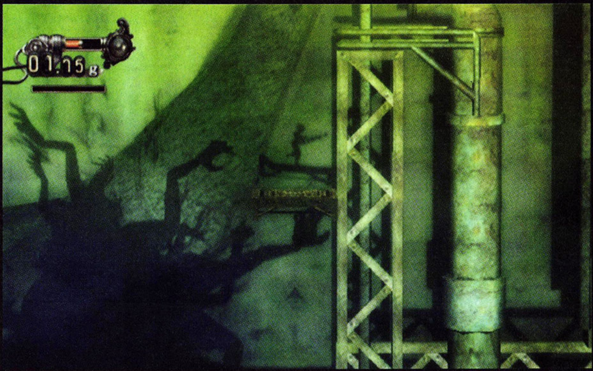
changing the angle of the shadows so you can jump to a previously unreachable platform.

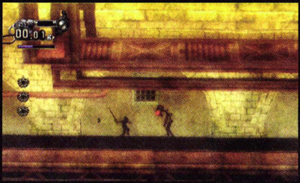
Speaking of shifting angles, you have to do just that to get through some of the Shadow Corridors (side areas that feel more dreamlike than the rest of the game, thanks to the brighter lighting and a wavy effect on the edge of the screen) that are sprinkled throughout the tower. In these Shadow Corridors, you rotate the environment around you by tapping left or right on the Control Pad to reach the exit. (Other Shadow Corridors have you flipping switches or avoiding jets of flame.) Successfully get to the end, and you are rewarded with purple orbs that are used to level up the main character. (In addition to accruing purple orbs from Shadow Corridors, you can acquire them from defeated enemies.) Leveling up becomes important as you progress: the tower is crawling with shadowy spiderlike creatures and other beasties. Fighting these monsters is fairly straightforward once you have a weapon (such as the rusty sword you grab as you enter the Lower Tower area); you just tap B to swing your blade. The combat itself can be challenging early on—particularly when fighting large arachnids—but you can deal more damage by leveling up.

Some enemies cannot be defeated by traditional means, however; your weapons are no good against creatures with blue eyes. For them you must use the tower's arsenal to your advantage. By hitting a switch with your sword, you can activate a device that shoots arrows, making short work of the azure-eyed enemies.

As much as we desired to keep playing, we didn't want to spoil the adventure for ourselves before Lost in Shadow's January release. Based on what we've played so far, we think it'll be worth the wait. —JUSTIN C.

Wii
PUBLISHER: **HUDSON**
DEVELOPER: **HUDSON**
RELEASE: **JANUARY 2011**

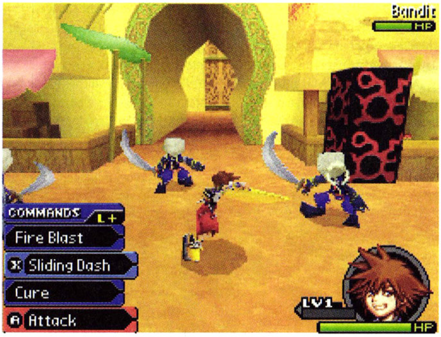




Jewel

Reawakened. Reunited. Re:coded.

Sora, Mickey, and friends return to the wonderful worlds of Disney in Kingdom Hearts Re:coded for Nintendo DS.

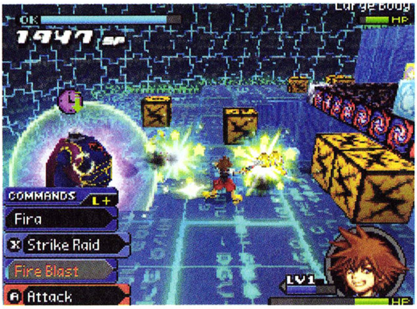


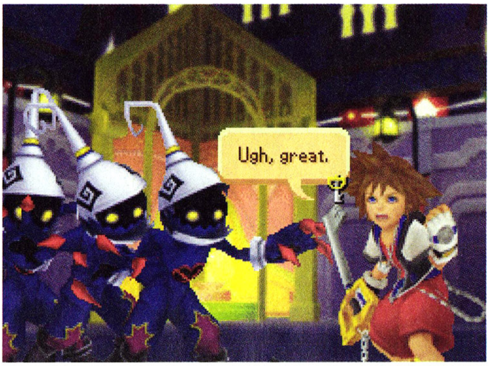
The message sent by fans around the world is clear: they want more Kingdom Hearts. Every chapter of the Disney-meets-Square Enix action-RPG series has been met with critical acclaim and stellar sales, and the previous installment on the Nintendo DS handheld (Kingdom Hearts 358/2 Days) dominated the 2009 Nintendo Power Awards fans'-choice categories. Gamers just can't seem to get enough of the series or its Keyblade-wielding, spiky-haired protagonists—and luckily for them, Square Enix is obliging. An enhanced version of a game that was originally released for Japanese mobile phones, Kingdom Hearts Re:coded is headed to DS, and it's poised to satiate fans with traditional Kingdom Hearts action and familiar environments augmented by an all-new story and a wealth of fresh play mechanics.

BY **CHRIS HOFFMAN**

PUBLISHER: **SQUARE ENIX** DEVELOPER:: **SQUARE ENIX/h.a.n.d.** RELEASE: **JANUARY 2011**

DS


OK
1947 SP
HP
COMMANDS L+
Fira
Strike Raid
Fire Blast
Attack
LV1
HP



[Above] The digital world is yours to explore in Re:coded.

02 / 16
COMMANDS L+
Fire
Blizzard Buster
Potion
Attack
LV1

Offense-L
Charge-L
Auto-Block-L
Attack

00 / 16
COMMANDS L+
Spark Storm
Curaga
Aero
Talk
LV2

A HEARTFELT RETURN

Set after the events of Kingdom Hearts and Kingdom Hearts II (and by extension, all the other games in the series), Kingdom Hearts Re:coded brings the focus back to the series's main cast: Sora, King Mickey, Donald, Goofy, and Riku. Unlike in Kingdom Hearts 358/2 Days, there's almost no mention of the shadowy Organization XIII, and the game progression is story-driven rather than mission-based. But that's not to say that Re:coded doesn't have its share of cloaked beings and mysterious happenings.

The tale begins when Jiminy Cricket—who accompanied Sora and friends on their journeys and chronicled their adventures—discovers a strange message written in his journal. The words in the journal were erased during the mind-altering events of Kingdom Hearts: Chain of Memories for Game Boy Advance, but Jiminy now finds one line he's never seen before: "Their hurting will be mended when you return to end it." With no idea of who wrote the message or what it means, Jiminy turns to King Mickey for help. And luckily, Mickey has a solution: he can convert the journal into computerized data, which should enable him to view and interact with its information. Admittedly, it doesn't make a lot of sense, but since when does anything need to follow normal rules of logic in the world of Kingdom Hearts?

Unfortunately, viewing the digitized journal doesn't go as planned; red-and-black blocks—data bugs—clutter the screen, preventing Mickey and Jiminy from getting the information they seek. The solution? They enlist the aid of a digital facsimile of Sora, who they program to look, fight, and act just like the real thing.

"Data Sora is composed of Sora's data from the first Kingdom Hearts, and exists only within the realm of the Jiminy Memo data," explains Kingdom Hearts series producer Tetsuya Nomura. "He does not have any emotions, but his personality traits and tendencies are all identical to those of the original Sora."

KING MICKEY Mickey is the king of Disney Castle and also a Keyblade wielder. It was his idea to turn Jiminy's journal into digital form.

As the data version of Sora, it's up to you to explore the game's digitally re-created worlds and find the hidden info that can reveal the meaning behind the journal's strange message.

CODE OF A HERO

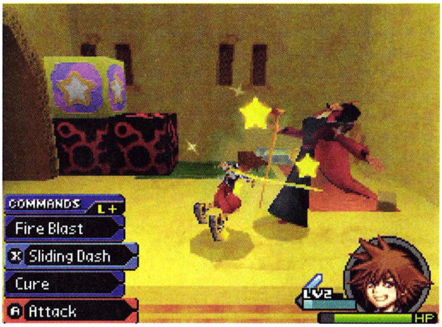
Though he's not the real deal, the data version of Sora is just as skilled as the original Sora. You attack with the Keyblade (or, at least, a digital duplicate of it) by pressing the A Button, jump by pressing B, execute defensive maneuvers (such as blocking and dodging) by pressing Y, and manipulate the camera by sliding the stylus along the touch screen or holding R and directing the camera via the Control Pad.

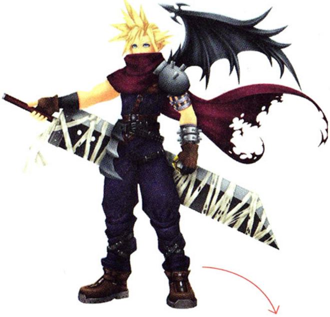
Most of the controls will be familiar to anyone who's played 358/2 Days, but the item and magic systems have been streamlined into a single category known as Deck Commands (which is based on a combat system from Kingdom Hearts: Birth by Sleep for PSP). Instead of having to fumble through multilayered menus, you can access your equipped Deck

Tidus
HP
COMMANDS L+
Firaga
Air Spiral
Curaga
Attack
MAX
LOCATION
Destiny Islands
TREE
INFORMATION
Defeat Tidus!

COMMANDS L+
Firaga
Air Spiral
Curaga
Attack
LV1

Yeah, I'm Cid.
This here's my shop.


COMMANDS L+
Fire Blast
X Sliding Dash
Cure
A Attack
LV2
HP

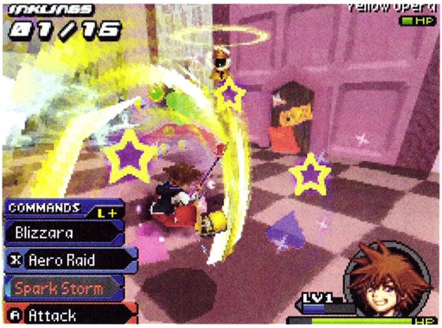


CLOUD
Although Cloud acts like an antagonistic loner, he's actually a good guy. He joins your party in Olympus Coliseum.

Commands—including elemental magic and numerous Keyblade skills—with a press of the X Button. Deck Commands level up as you use them, and you can even combine abilities into new, more-powerful commands. Best of all, there's no limit on how many times you can use magic and attack skills, although you do have to wait for the commands to recharge after each use.

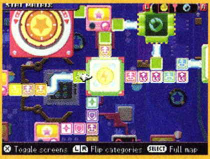
Data Sora has access to several other new tricks. As you bash enemies, a gauge fills up, which temporarily grants you new powers (such as increased elemental resistances, enhanced healing abilities, or automatic defensive moves). Once the gauge is full, you'll be able to pull off a powerful finishing move; there are several types to choose from, ranging from traditional attacks to timing-based button-pressing minigames to a first-person-shooting mode.

Additionally, as a digitized being, Sora has a refreshingly unique leveling-up system. "Based on the panel system of Kingdom Hearts 358/2 Days, the panel in Kingdom Hearts Re:coded is inspired by the data world, and resembles a circuit


INKLINGS
01/15
Yellow Opera
HP
COMMANDS L+
Blizzara
X Aero Raid
Spark Storm
A Attack
LV1
HP

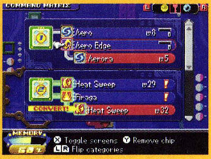
Enter the Matrix

In Kingdom Hearts Re:coded you'll use different types of matrices to power up the digital re-creation of Sora. Here's how they work.


STAT MATRIX
Toggle screens
LR Flip categories
SELECT Full map

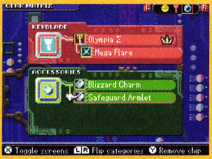
STAT MATRIX

The Stat Matrix is a circuit board that's used to increase Sora's capabilities. By installing chips into the board, you can raise Sora's overall level, as well as his attack strength, defense, magic, luck, elemental resistance, and more. Lines of chips can be installed only next to an area that's designated as a CPU, but as you progress through the game, new CPUs and new sections of the matrix become active, enabling you to install more chips. If you install enough chips to create a connection between two CPUs, you'll double the power of the chips between them. Additionally, by installing chips in the right places you can unlock new abilities, earn extra slots for equipment and commands, and activate "cheats," such as altering the game's difficulty and increasing the drop rate for items.


COMMAND MATRIX
Aero
Aero Edge
Aerora
Heat Sweep
Firaga
CONVERT!
Heat Sweep
MEMORY
Toggle screens
Remove chip
LR Flip categories

COMMAND MATRIX

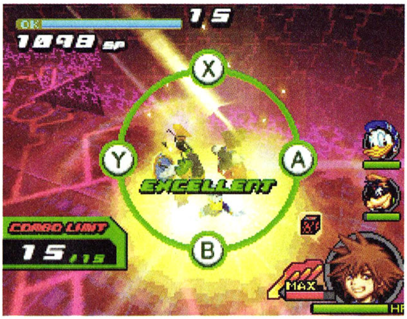
You use the Command Matrix to equip Sora with various techniques and items. You start the game with three Deck Command slots, into which you can install a variety of abilities, from Blizzard, Thunder, and Slow spells to attacks such as Quick Blitz, Sliding Dash, and Aerial Slam; plus items such as healing potions and elixirs. Two abilities or items can be assigned to a single Deck Command, and as you defeat enemies you'll be able to permanently convert them into a single, more-powerful command. (An Aerora wind spell combined with an Air Spiral somersault attack becomes a Wind Storm attack, for example.) When you convert abilities, you'll often receive upgrades such as a shortened delay between command uses, a bonus level boost, or a faster fill rate for the strength-boosting Clock Gauge.


GEAR MATRIX
KEYBLADE
Olympia Σ
Mega Flare
ACCESSORIES
Blizzard Charm
Safeguard Armlet
Toggle screens
LR Flip categories
Remove chip

GEAR MATRIX

The Gear Matrix is pretty straightforward. It's here that you equip your Keyblade's keychain; you'll find several types throughout the game, each with different attributes and Clock Gauge powers. The Gear Matrix also lets you select your Keyblade's finishing move; options include Mega Flare (a massive explosion), Speed Combo (which requires you to quickly push directions on the Control Pad as they appear on the screen), and D-Blizzara (with which you encase yourself in ice and bowl over your enemies). You can equip defensive accessories as well, including ones that protect you from status ailments or increase your defenses when your health gets low.

The Keyblade takes its power from the wielder's strength of heart.


1098 SP
15
X
Y
A
B
EXCELLENT
COMBO LIMIT
15
MAX
HP

[Above] As you attack enemies, you'll build up a meter called the Clock Gauge. Once it's maxed out, you'll get to unleash a powerful finishing move. The one seen here requires timed button presses.

DONALD DUCK
A magic-user, Donald fought alongside Sora to defeat the forces of evil. He eventually teams up with "data Sora" in Re:coded.

board. Players place chips on these boards to progress in their leveling," Nomura notes.

BLOCK BUSTER

Sora's task is threefold: He must explore the datascape, eliminate the Heartless (the primary enemies in the Kingdom Hearts series), and destroy any corrupt data he encounters. Since the worlds you visit are all based on information extracted from Jiminy's records of previous adventures, you'll find yourself returning to familiar locales, such as Destiny Islands (the place Sora calls home), Traverse Town, Wonderland (from *Alice in Wonderland*), Agrabah (from *Aladdin*), and Olympus Coliseum (from *Hercules*). One of the coolest aspects of the series has always been how you're able to interact with a variety of characters from different stories, and that remains true in Re:coded. You'll cross paths not only with Disney heroes and villains such as Aladdin, Jasmine, Hercules, Jafar, Hades, and Maleficent, but also faces from Final Fantasy, including Cloud and Cid (from Final Fantasy VII), Selphie (from FF VIII), and Tidus and Wakka (from FF X).

The locations and characters will ring a bell with longtime Kingdom Hearts fans, but the situations you encounter are full of all-new twists. Most noticeable is the data corruption, which takes the form of blocks (called Blox in the game) that now litter the environments.

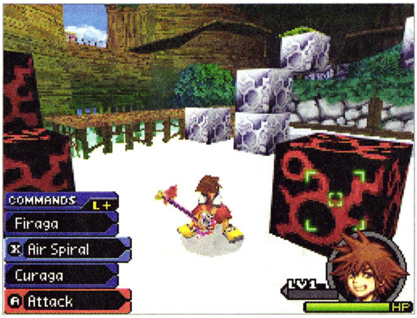
"The world in Kingdom Hearts Re:coded is a realization of Jiminy's journal in data form, and in it are...bug blocks," states Nomura. "Players need to combine blocks to create rare blocks and obtain items. There are also blocks that expand the range of action or lead to new areas—for example, those that enable players to jump very high, adding replay value for those who really want to dive into the game."

Other block types include smashable red-and-black Blox, green Ghost Blox that function as disappearing platforms, Slider Blox that you can move along the ground, red Blast Blox that explode violently shortly after you touch them, Magnet Blox that pull you toward them, and more. The blocks can be found throughout every world—on the ground and in the air—and their inclusion gives Re:coded a greater emphasis on platforming and dynamic puzzle-solving than other Kingdom Hearts titles.

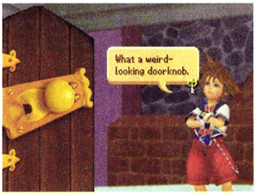
Well, here goes nothing...

1003 SP
+22
COMMANDS L+
Goofy Tornado
Donald Firaga
Donald Firaga
MAX

Why is he frozen in place?


COMMANDS L+
Firaga
Air Spiral
Curaga
Attack
LV1
HP

INFORMATION
Challenge complete!
Medic
COMMANDS L+
Pulse Tracer
Confuse
Magnera
Attack
LV2
HP


What a weird-looking doorknob.

SORA
Sora is the hero of Kingdom Hearts. In Re:coded you play as a digital re-creation of Sora, while the real Sora is living peacefully.

Kingdom Connections

Sure, the Kingdom Hearts games may look cute and innocent, but their stories are deceptively complex. Here's a brief look at how they fit together.

KINGDOM HEARTS

In the original Kingdom Hearts game, Sora is separated from his friends Kairi and Riku when the malevolent Heartless destroys his homeworld. After obtaining a magical weapon called the Keyblade, Sora joins forces with Donald and Goofy, and the three embark on a quest to find their friends and save other worlds from the Heartless. Though the heroes are mostly successful, Sora is temporarily transformed into a Heartless, and at the end of the journey King Mickey and Riku seal themselves behind a door to stop the flow of darkness.

BASED ON MEMORIES

SIMULTANEOUSLY

You're more outgoing now, you know that?

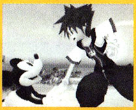
KINGDOM HEARTS: CHAIN OF MEMORIES

While continuing their quest to find their friends, Sora, Donald, and Goofy, along with their traveling companion Jiminy Cricket, are lured into Castle Oblivion by members of the mysterious Organization XIII. As the heroes explore the castle, many memories of the people and places they encountered during their previous adventure take physical form, but other memories are lost or replaced. After defeating the members of the organization and meeting a girl named Naminé, the heroes are placed into special sleep pods that will restore their memories. During these events, the records in Jiminy's journal are wiped as well.

KINGDOM HEARTS 358/2 DAYS

Taking place before, during, and after the events of Chain of Memories, 358/2 Days focuses on the members of Organization XIII, particularly on Roxas, who came into existence when Sora became a Heartless. Despite the events that occurred at Castle Oblivion, not all members of Organization XIII are evil, as evidenced by the friendship that forms between Roxas and fellow organization members Axel and Xion, but that doesn't stop the tale from ending in tragedy.

BASED ON DIGITIZED JOURNAL ENTRY



KINGDOM HEARTS II

Refreshed and restored after a yearlong slumber in Castle Oblivion, Sora, Donald, and Goofy continue their quest to find King Mickey and Riku. Their journey takes them to several new Disney-inspired worlds—including ones based on *The Lion King*, *Tron*, and *Pirates of the Caribbean*—where they face both the Heartless and Organization XIII. After a hard-fought battle, the heroes ultimately emerge victorious and are at last reunited with their lost comrades.

KINGDOM HEARTS RE:CODED

Having thwarted the forces of evil in their previous adventures, the heroes of Kingdom Hearts have earned some much-deserved peace and quiet. Or so it seems. A concerned Jiminy Cricket discovers a new message in his journal despite the fact that the book should be predominantly blank after the events of Chain of Memories. In an effort to find where the message came from, King Mickey converts the journal into data form, and a computerized version of Sora embarks on a mission to explore and debug digitally re-created versions of several of the worlds that players got to visit in the original Kingdom Hearts and Kingdom Hearts: Chain of Memories.

BREAKING THE CODE

Blox aren't the only strange things you'll face in the datascape. A mysterious figure wearing a hooded cloak seems to be up to no good, and as you explore the various worlds, converse with nonplayable characters, and accomplish tasks, you'll discover other evidence of data corruption. In Wonderland, for instance, everybody has lost their memories and you must collect them to make things right. In Agrabah a data glitch allows Jafar to obtain his own magic lamp, which permits him to create phantom clones of himself that pursue you through the city. Other situations are even more confounding—a missing bridge prevents you from reaching part of Destiny Islands, and a building in Traverse Town has changed from a three-dimensional construct to a

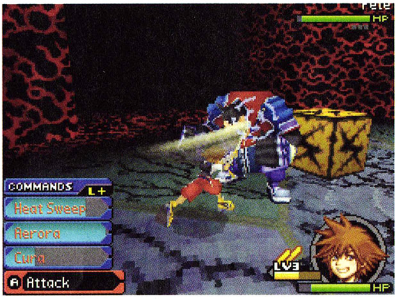
COMMANDS
Potion
Round Blitz
Slow
Attack
LV1
HP
LOCATION
Destiny Islands
TREE

INFORMATION
Investigate the special block!

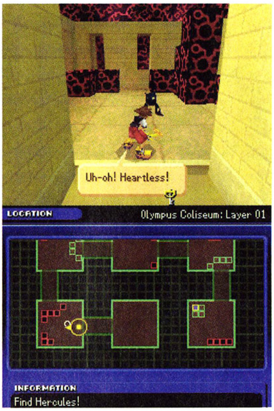
flattened 2D plane and taken Louie (of *DuckTales* fame) with it.

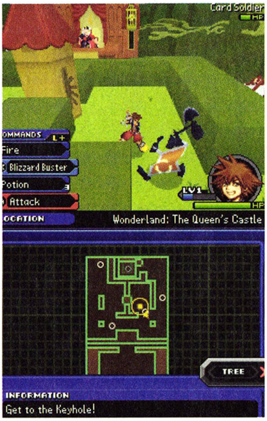
In many of these cases, the problems are caused by computer glitches, and the only way to deal with them is to hack into the data directly through a "backdoor." A radarlike interface lets you know when you're near one of these invisible doorways, and when you find it you'll be able to smash open a portal to a digital realm known as a System Sector.

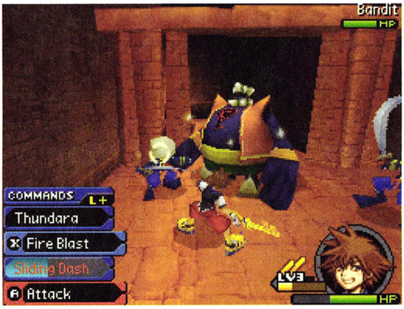
"[System Sectors] show the flip side of each of the worlds," comments Nomura. "Their shapes and platforms shift each time players enter, and victory conditions vary as well, so it's an unpredictable area that's exciting to play every time."


Pete
HP
COMMANDS L+
Heat Sweep
Aerora
Cura
Attack
LV3
HP

[Above] Pete is always causing trouble. It's time to teach the big jerk a lesson!

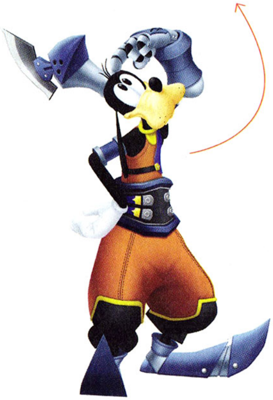

Uh-oh! Heartless!
LOCATION
Olympus Coliseum: Layer 01
INFORMATION
Find Hercules!


Card Soldier
HP
OMMANDS L+
Fire
Blizzard Buster
Potion 3
Attack
LV1
HP
OCATION
Wonderland: The Queen's Castle
TREE
INFORMATION
Get to the Keyhole!

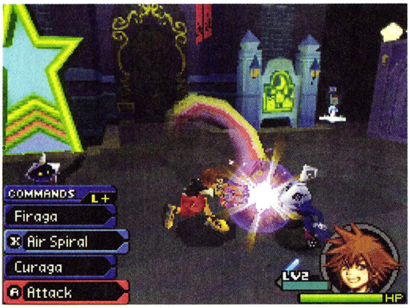

Bandit
HP
COMMANDS L+
Thundara
Fire Blast
Sliding Dash
Attack
LV3
HP

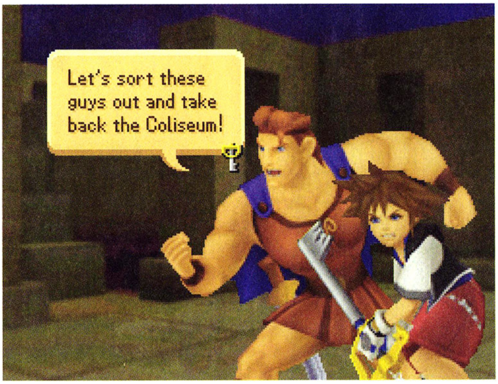
GOOFY

Like Donald, Goofy teamed up with Sora to battle the Heartless, and he also lends a hand in Re:coded. He fights using a mighty shield.

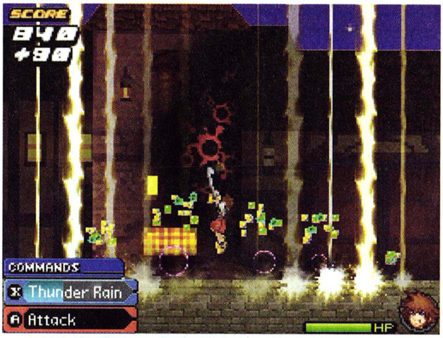


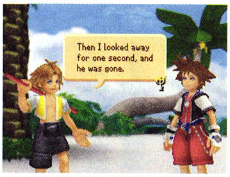
System Sectors have angular landscapes, limited color schemes, and streams of digital information that flow through the air and across the floor—stark in comparison to the colorful, organic environments in most of the worlds. Inside the System Sectors you'll battle not only normal Heartless, but also a handful of powerful data-bug-infected Heartless (identified by the fact that they're partially invisible). When you've debugged a room of the System Sector (by beating the buggy baddies into oblivion), the room will shift from a menacing red to a soothing blue, and once you've cleansed every room and floor, you'll be able to exit the sector and return to your quest. System Sectors also provide a great way to power up; as you fight foes, you'll earn Sector Points that you can


COMMANDS L+
Firaga
Air Spiral
Curaga
Attack
LV2
HP

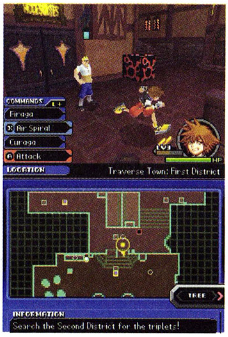

Let's sort these guys out and take back the Coliseum!

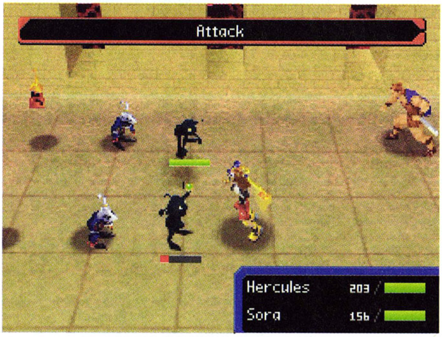
SELPHIE
In Final Fantasy VIII Selphie helped save the world. In Kingdom Hearts she's one of Sora's friends.


SCORE
840
+90
COMMANDS
Thunder Rain
Attack
HP


Then I looked away for one second, and he was gone.

237 SP
Shadow
HP
COMMANDS
Firaga
Air Spiral
Curaga
Attack
LV2
HP


COMMANDS
Firaga
Air Spiral
Curaga
Attack
LV3
HP
LOCATION
Traverse Town: First District
INFORMATION
Search the Second District for the triplets!

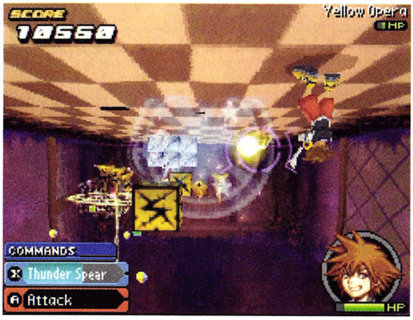

Attack
Hercules 203
Sora 156

redeem for rewards after you've conquered the sector. You can even earn extra Sector Points by wagering on if you can perform special challenges, such as completing a floor without taking a certain number of hits, destroying a set number of Blox, or beating a floor without healing.

VARIETY IS THE KEY

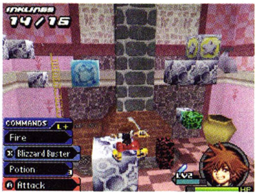
Squashing bugs and repairing damaged System Sectors goes a long way toward uncovering the mysteries of Jiminy's journal, but the only way to truly eliminate the problems and recover the missing data is to find the keyhole in each world. Once "data Sora" locates the keyhole, he'll blast it with the power of his Keyblade, which lets him venture inside and face the world's boss.

Sometimes the boss fights are traditional encounters in which you simply defeat the boss by any means necessary, but there's often a lot more to it than that. In Traverse Town the boss area takes the form of a 2D side-scrolling platformer; you must climb (and smash) Blox, jump pits, collect special power-ups, and battle Heartless as the screen automatically scrolls to the right. In Wonderland the boss area is in the guise of a behind-the-back-perspective shooter à la the arcade classic Space Harrier. As you automatically run toward the screen, you'll use lock-on shooting to blast foes and Blox while leaping pits and dodging enemy fire; eventually you'll even have to do it while


SCORE
10560
Yellow Opera
HP
COMMANDS
Thunder Spear
Attack
HP

[Above] Do not adjust your magazine—Sora is indeed running on the ceiling. This Space Harrier-style shooting is just one of several types of gameplay that you'll encounter...but it's not usually upside down.

I want some answers!


INKLINGS
14/16
COMMANDS
Fire
Blizzard Buster
Potion
Attack
LV2
HP

ALADDIN
He may be a "diamond in the rough," but Aladdin has a heart of gold. His main concern is protecting Jasmine from the evil in Agrabah.

3D Is Key

Kingdom Hearts series producer Tetsuya Nomura answers our questions about the highly anticipated Kingdom Hearts 3D for the Nintendo 3DS handheld.

NINTENDO POWER We understand that Re:coded has a secret ending exclusive to the DS version of the game. Does that movie contain any hints regarding the direction of Kingdom Hearts 3D?
TETSUYA NOMURA: There is a hint regarding Kingdom Hearts 3D in the secret movie. Players will find out once they see for themselves, but the movie includes some shocking statements and dialogue that pertains to Kingdom Hearts 3D, so it's definitely worth watching!

Where does Kingdom Hearts 3D fall in the series timeline?
Kingdom Hearts 3D takes place after Kingdom Hearts Re:coded, making it the latest development in the Kingdom Hearts timeline.

Will any new Disney worlds be making their first Kingdom Hearts appearance in Kingdom Hearts 3D? How about any new Disney or Square Enix characters?
We're still deciding which worlds to include, but there may be a major overhaul in terms of the selection of Disney worlds.

One of the most intriguing parts of the E3 trailer was when the sky starts raining Soras. Can you give us some hint as to what that represents?
I can't go into detail on exactly what it represents, but it's basically a nod to the fact that something impossible may unfold, since it's not realistically possible for it to actually "rain Soras." The visual concept of falling is also an element I like to incorporate in the game.

Which development team is working on Kingdom Hearts 3D?
The development team that worked on Kingdom Hearts: Birth by Sleep.

Should fans of the series look at this as "Kingdom Hearts III?"
Kingdom Hearts III and Kingdom Hearts 3D are not the same. However, it is a brand-new adventure starring Sora and Riku. The story is on par with that of a numbered title, and I'm sure the ending will shock fans.

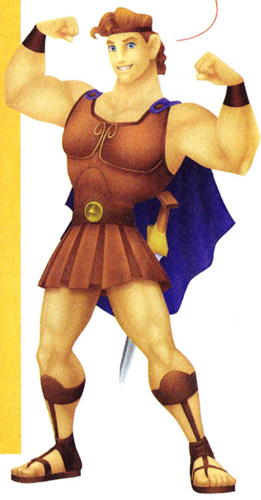
Many of our readers are devoted Kingdom Hearts fans. (In fact, 358/2 Days won the readers' vote for Game of the Year in 2009.) Would you share with them some new tidbit regarding Kingdom Hearts 3D that you haven't mentioned anywhere else?
There have been installments in which players returned to Disney worlds introduced in previous Kingdom Hearts titles, however, the catalog of Disney worlds will be almost completely renewed with Kingdom Hearts 3D. I do have some ideas in mind already, but please keep an eye out as we reveal which new worlds and characters will be making an appearance!

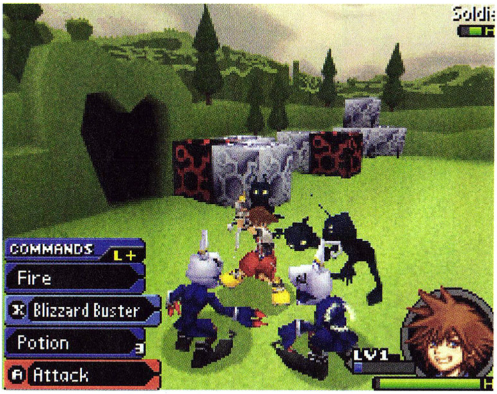
running on the wall or on the ceiling.

"The intent was always to offer an action-packed experience with intuitive controls," Nomura remarks. "Instead of having players repeat the same actions over and over, we decided to incorporate a variety of styles, as we felt this would keep everyone better motivated and entertained. Because this game takes place in a 'data world,' anything can happen. With all that's going on, I don't think players will ever get tired of the gameplay."

The action takes a radical turn in Olympus Coliseum, too. Almost the entire world is set within the keyhole, where the traditional action is replaced with that of a turn-based role-playing game. After you encounter an enemy you're pulled into a battle scene, in which Sora (who's eventually joined by Cloud and Hercules) and the enemies alternate delivering attacks. A well-timed press of the A Button will cause you to land extra hits, and a tap of the Y Button will let you block or avoid enemy strikes. (The skill-based battles are reminiscent of Mario's RPG escapades.) To add to the depth of the battles, you can combine your Deck Commands into new attacks, plus you can acquire special power-ups to give you an edge, such as boosting your

HERCULES
The son of Zeus wants to end the chaos in Olympus Coliseum, but he can't do it alone, so he teams up with Sora.




Soldi
COMMANDS L+
Fire
Blizzard Buster
Potion 3
Attack
LV1

Sora, where have you been!?

[Above] Oh, just saving the world once or twice. Thanks for asking, Selphie.

strength, enhancing your defense, or regenerating your health. Furthermore, the strength of the enemies is tied to how many Blox are nearby, adding more strategy to the proceedings.

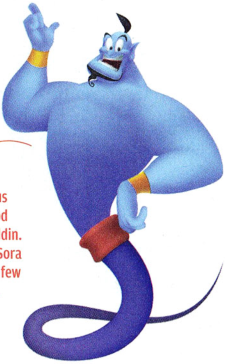
Upon defeating each boss you'll purge the world of data bugs and Blox, but that doesn't mean you're done with that area. If you wish, you can return to conquered worlds to partake in optional side quests, find new System Sectors, challenge the boss again (to achieve a new high score), or replay the entire world.

QUESTIONS OF THE HEART

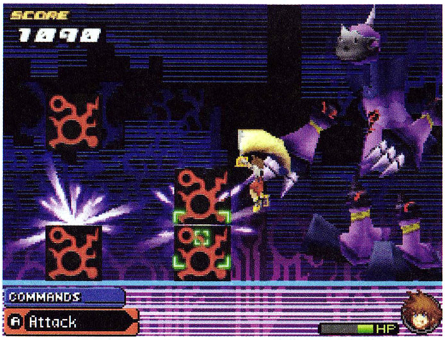
Each victory brings Sora one step closer to uncovering the secrets hidden within Jiminy's journal, but in true Kingdom Hearts fashion, the situation gets increasingly complex as the adventure unfolds. New messages mysteriously appear in the pages of the journal, the enigmatic cloaked figure repeatedly appears to goad Sora (or is he guiding him?), and the lines between the real world and the digital world begin to blur. Eventually the fate of not only Sora, but also King Mickey, Donald, Goofy, Jiminy, and others—perhaps even the fate of the whole Kingdom Hearts universe—will be in your hands.

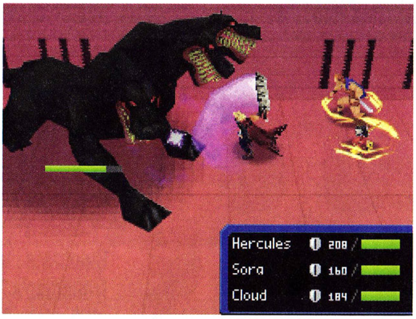
The only way to solve the myriad riddles, of course, is to play through Re:coded and put an end to the latest diabolical threat. Fortunately for the legions of Kingdom Hearts fans, that task appears to be well worth undertaking.

"There aren't too many other handheld games out there that are as action-packed as Kingdom Hearts Re:coded," affirms Nomura. "The action in the game is very rich, with a system that enables players to perform a variety of attacks through simple, intuitive controls, and an unprecedented variety of battle styles, including side-scrolling, shooting, and classic RPG.... There is a lot to look forward to in Kingdom Hearts Re:coded."



GENIE
The boisterous Genie is a good friend of Aladdin. He helps out Sora by granting a few of his wishes.


SCORE
1090
COMMANDS
Attack
HP


Hercules 208
Sora 160
Cloud 184

[Above] The turn-based RPG-style battles in Olympus Coliseum are pretty cool. The fast-paced, timing-oriented combat is so fun that it could have easily been the basis for an entire game.

Red Nocturne
GOOD
COMBO LIMIT
11

SCORE
8450
+90
Blue Rhapsody
COMMANDS
Blizzard Arrow
Attack
HP

MARIO'S MAGIC MOMENTS

Celebrate the Super Mario Bros. franchise's 25th anniversary in style with a look at the greatest moments of the Wii edition of Super Mario All-Stars.

BY **PHIL THEOBOLD**

PUBLISHER: **NINTENDO** DEVELOPER: **NINTENDO** RELEASE: **DECEMBER 2010** **Wii**

H**appy Anniversary, Mario!** Well, it's not the anniversary of Mario himself, but of the game that defined the character and made him a household name: Super Mario Bros. It's been 25 years since we were first introduced to the Mushroom Kingdom and all of its wonderful inhabitants.

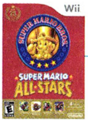
The first three Super Mario Bros. titles played a huge role in the popularity of the NES during the '80s and into the '90s. The games were all best-sellers, and Mario and company ended up on all sorts of merchandise ranging from toys to clothes to garbage cans to bed sheets. Super Mario Bros. was everywhere!

In 1993 Nintendo decided to pay tribute to Super Mario Bros. with the release of Super Mario All-Stars for the then-current console, the Super NES. The game cartridge contained updated versions of the three Super Mario Bros. NES titles as well as a game that US players had yet to experience—Super Mario Bros.: The Lost Levels, which was the original Japanese sequel to the first Super Mario Bros. These four enhanced games not only contained updated, 16-bit-caliber graphics and sound, but also featured multiple little tweaks to improve gameplay. Seventeen years later, Nintendo is celebrating the Super Mario Bros. silver anniversary with a special Wii release of Super Mario All-Stars.

Like the SNES Super Mario All-Stars, the version for the Wii console is a souped-up offering; although the original NES versions of all four of the game's included titles are available on Virtual Console, devoted fans will find plenty of new delights here. In addition to the All-Stars game disc, this limited-edition collector's package contains an art booklet that details the history of the Super Mario Bros. series, as well as an exclusive soundtrack CD that features classic music from the original Super Mario Bros. game all the way up to Super Mario Galaxy 2.

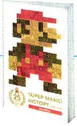
To help prepare you for the grand return of Super Mario All-Stars, we've picked the most magical moments from each game in the collection (or in the case of The Lost Levels, the most *maddening* moments). You'll soon be able to experience those moments all over again when the game hits Wii in December.

The Collection contains the Super Mario All-Stars Wii game disc, a 20-track CD featuring classic Mario music and sound effects, and a 32-page book containing never-before-seen original art and interviews with the series creators. All for just $29.99!

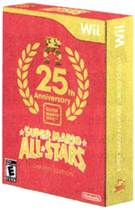


Super Mario All-Stars

Super Mario History CD



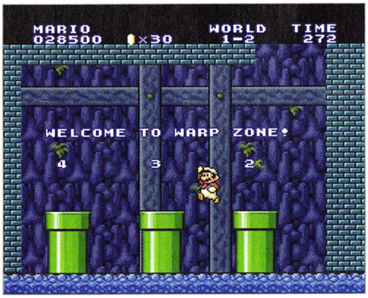
Super Mario History book



THE FIVE MAGIC MOMENTS OF

Super Mario Bros.

Being the first entry in the Super Mario series, just about everything in this game could count as a magic moment. Nonetheless, here are our favorites.



WELCOME TO WARP ZONE!

1

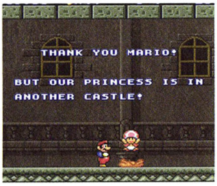
WELCOME TO WARP ZONE!

While exploring World 1-2, it's inevitable that you'll stumble across the fact that the ceiling blocks can be broken. With that knowledge, it doesn't take much for a crafty player to learn that he can get on top of the ceiling and run across the top of the screen. This leads to one of the coolest secrets in Super Mario Bros.: by running across the ceiling past the underground's exit, you discover the hidden Warp Zone. This secret room not only allows you to skip levels, but it also encourages players to continue exploring every inch of the game.

2

THANK YOU, MARIO!

As we all know, the goal in Super Mario Bros. is to rescue Princess Peach from the clutches of Bowser. So why are we already confronting the Koopa King at the end of World 1-4? Don't we have a couple dozen more levels to go before the end of the game? Alas, we learn that this Bowser is a fake, a mere decoy meant to distract us. But that doesn't make defeating him any less fun. Besides, defeating the fake Bowser allows you to rescue one of Peach's loyal Mushroom Retainers. Upon being freed, each Retainer shows his appreciation with the immortal words, "Thank you Mario! But our princess is in another castle!"

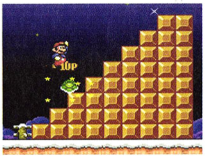


THANK YOU MARIO!

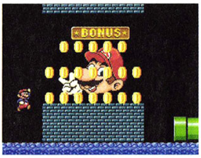
BUT OUR PRINCESS IS IN ANOTHER CASTLE!

INFINITE LIVES

3



Here's a moment that only the most skilled Mario masters can pull off. At the very end of World 3-1 there is a pair of Koopa Troopas marching down the staircase that leads to the flag. Let the first one pass by and prepare to stomp his buddy. If you have pixel-perfect jumping skills, your jump will knock the Koopa Troopa into his shell and send it bouncing off of the stairs. As the shell rebounds, however, Mario will fall back down and automatically stomp the shell again, starting a cycle of stomping and rebounding. For the first few stomps, you'll just earn points, but soon each stomp will net you a 1-Up. Just don't get greedy, or there will be dire consequences.



4 OF PIPES AND GREEN MUSHROOMS

Remember the first time you played Super Mario Bros. and realized that you could press down while standing on certain pipes to enter a new room? Or the first time you jumped up and accidentally hit an Invisible Block to reveal a 1-Up Mushroom? What about the first time you went to smash a block that turned out to be full of coins? How about your maiden voyage up into the clouds via a recently uncovered vine? Yeah, Super Mario Bros. changed the way we played games. Instead of simply making our way to the end or trying for the high score, we dedicated our play time to tracking down all of the mysterious goodies that were tucked away in the Mushroom Kingdom. Each new discovery was a magic moment in itself.

GRAB THE FLAG

5

Has there ever been a cooler way to complete a level? There's something extremely satisfying about climbing to the top of a staircase and leaping onto a flagpole. Touching the very top of the pole to get the 5,000-point bonus always makes us feel like winners. But what could make a perfect flag grab even better? Fireworks! Hit the flag when the last digit of the game's timer is 1, 3, or 6 to end the level in style. On the other hand, all it takes is a mistimed jump to make us slip off the stairs and be forced to accept the lesser bonuses, which are usually just a couple hundred points. Lame!

THE FIVE MAGIC MOMENTS OF

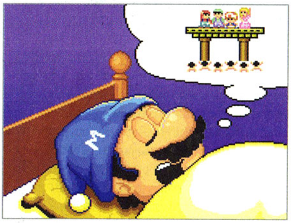
Super Mario Bros. 2

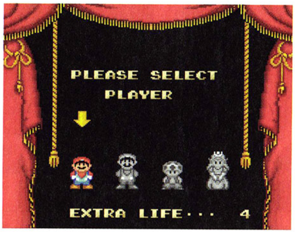
Super Mario Bros. 2 is a very different game from its predecessor. It offers a lot more to explore, and tons more magic moments to experience.

1

THE GRAND FINALE

Perhaps the most magic moment in SMB2 comes from the entire ending sequence. With Bowser absent from this adventure, Mario and company confront the villainous frog Wart at the climax. In an exciting battle, you have to grab vegetables that shoot out of a large machine and shove them down Wart's gaping maw. Once Wart is defeated, we learn the game's shocking secret. Spoiler alert: It was all a dream! It may be a clichéd twist, but with the impressive visual of Mario sleeping, the slow cast roll, and the beautiful, dreamlike music, we were hardly disappointed.

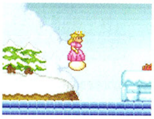




2

A FABULOUS FOURSOME

In the original Super Mario Bros., Player 1 was always stuck playing as Mario, and Player 2 was forced to be Luigi. Super Mario Bros. 2 changed all that. Not only could players choose to play as either of the brothers, but also as Princess Peach or Toad. Far from being a mere cosmetic change, each of the four characters controls differently, greatly changing the strategy for each level. Mario, not surprisingly, is the most well-rounded character. Luigi is a bit slow when pulling vegetables from the ground, but he can jump extremely high. Peach makes up for her lack of strength with her ability to float through the air. Toad is not a strong jumper, but he's extremely strong and fast.



3

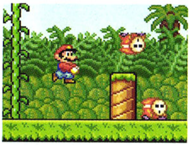
EGG RIDE

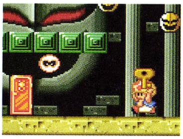
Birdo is an enemy you'll encounter multiple times throughout Super Mario Bros. 2. The standard way to defeat it is to jump on top of the eggs that it spits at you, then grab and hurl the projectiles at the unsuspecting enemy. In World 4-3, however, you're forced to curtail your boss-fighting instincts. As the stage begins, you find yourself trapped with Birdo on a small patch of land that's situated between a large wall and a body of water. Sure, you can take Birdo out, but then what? In this case, you're not meant to actually defeat the enemy—you're supposed to hop on one of its eggs and ride it across the vast watery expanse to the next section of the level. Tricks like this help Super Mario Bros. 2 stand out from the crowd.

ENEMY TOSSING

4

A lot of rules were changed in Super Mario Bros. 2. Take, for instance, the simple act of stomping an enemy. In the original game, this was Mario's primary method of dispatching foes. Imagine everyone's surprise when attempting that maneuver in this sequel. Instead of crushing the enemy beneath Mario's feet—nothing! Mario just stands on the bad guy's head. Heck, you can even ride around on foes. This time around, Mario has to pick up items and toss them at enemies to knock them out. There are plenty of lethal vegetables that you can lob as weapons, but it's way more satisfying to pick up the enemies and throw them at each other.





5

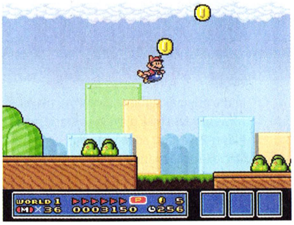
RUN FOR YOUR LIFE!

You enter a small room. Dodging a few minor enemies, you make your way to the prize that's hidden within the chamber. It's a key that you need to open a faraway door. As soon as you pick up the prize, you hear a noise. Suddenly a mask on the wall—you had assumed it was merely decorative—begins to shudder. It speeds toward you, its wicked grin and black, soulless eyes suggesting foul intent. The first time it happens your instinct is to fight, but that doesn't work. Your only option is to run. It doesn't matter, though. No matter where you go, this mask—a Phanto—will follow. It bolts through the air, it passes through doors, it moves effortlessly through walls. It will not stop until you relinquish the key or you perish. Before we faced Phanto, we had no idea that a Mario game could be terrifying.

THE FIVE MAGIC MOMENTS OF

Super Mario Bros. 3

Super Mario Bros. 3 was one of the most anticipated games of all time. It made myriad enhancements to the Mario formula, so it's no surprise that it has its fair share of magic moments.

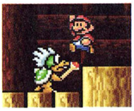


1

SUITING UP

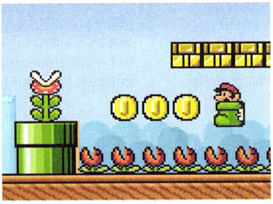
Overalls are great and all, but sometimes a plumber needs to change up his wardrobe. Super Mario Bros. 3 provides a lot of great outfits to choose from. The flight-granting Raccoon Suit is a classic, and making Mario soar through the sky for the first time, unhindered by gravity, is one of the highlights of the 8-bit era. The other suits are comparably awesome. The Tanooki Suit allows you to fly and turn into an invincible statue, the Frog Suit makes swimming through water levels a breeze, and the Hammer Suit allows you—at long last!—to turn the tables on those darn Hammer Bros. with fantastic offensive and defensive capabilities.

THE KOOPALINGS



2

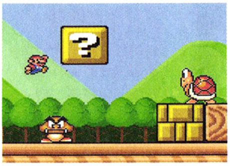
As if Bowser weren't bad enough, Super Mario Bros. 3 introduces a brood of unruly critters known collectively as the Koopalings. With their unique looks, bratty personalities, and pop-culture-inspired names (Larry, Wendy, Iggy, Roy, Lemmy, Ludwig, and Morton), these new villains make saving the Mushroom Kingdom all the more thrilling. Even the route to battle the Koopalings is exciting. Each of the little reptiles commands a massive airship that's armed to the teeth, and if you make it past all the cannon balls, Bullet Bills, and treacherous jumps, you still have to contend with the troublemaker at the end.



STYLING FOOTWEAR

3

Among the many different suits, Fire Flowers, Starmen, hammers, music boxes, and other items that can you can collect in Super Mario Bros. 3, none is more enigmatic than Goomba's Shoe (originally known as Kuribo's Shoe). This odd power-up can be acquired only in World 5-3, and despite its solitary appearance, it makes an impression. This large wind-up shoe normally houses a Goomba, but with a well-aimed bop from below, Mario or Luigi can knock the Goomba out and hijack the shoe for their own use. The sturdy sole of the footwear provides protection from just about anything. Enemies that are normally impervious to stomping (like Piranha Plants, Spinys, and Munchers) can be safely trod upon with Goomba's Shoe.

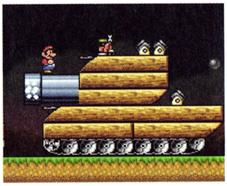


GO BIG OR GO HOME

4

When playing a platform game, there are certain types of worlds you expect to traverse. Super Mario Bros. 3 starts off with three of the basic types: grass, desert, and water. Sure, they're lots of fun, but they're hardly a surprise. When we first entered World 4, though—that got us to say, "Wow." World 4 is known as Big Island, and it definitely lives up to its name. From its oversized pipes to its massive ? Blocks to its frighteningly large Goombas, Big Island really makes you feel like the underdog. This novel world is a treat to explore.

THE GAUNTLET



5

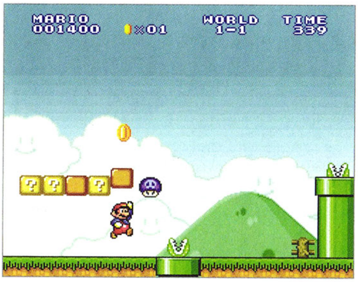
At the end of each world in Super Mario Bros. 3, Mario and Luigi confront the Koopalings aboard their flying airships. Those battles hardly prepare us for what we face in the game's final world, however. World 8 is clearly Bowser's last stand, and he pulls out all the stops by unleashing an army of deadly airships, tanks, and battleships. The nonstop barrage of cannon balls, random blasts of fire, and tool-chucking enemies combines with the grim backgrounds and foreboding music to let you know that Bowser is serious this time. It makes for an edge-of-your-seat end to an already outstanding game.

MADDENING

THE FIVE ~~MAGIC~~ MOMENTS OF

Super Mario Bros. : The Lost Levels

Super Mario Bros.: The Lost Levels appears on the Game Boy Color game Super Mario Bros. Deluxe with the subtitle "For Super Players." There's a reason for this: it's a very, very difficult game—almost to the point of madness.

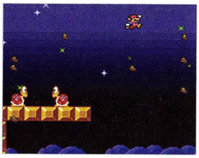


1

POISONOUS MUSHROOMS

When you punch a block in Super Mario Bros. and a mushroom pops out, it's time to celebrate, right? After all, we've been trained to recognize this fungal friend as something that makes Mario more powerful. It's not that easy in The Lost Levels, though. Touching a purple Poison Mushroom damages Mario as though he's been attacked by an enemy. Granted, this is a mistake that most people make only once, but that doesn't lessen the sting any.

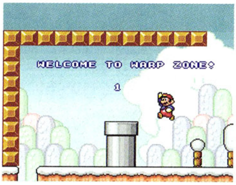
BLOWIN' IN THE WIND



4

If you want to be good at a platform game, you need to master the art of the jump, especially in a series that requires as much precision as Super Mario Bros. does. You may think you have the jumping physics down, even on those tricky trampolines, but The Lost Levels is right there to throw you another curve ball. In some levels, strong wind (as indicated by the blowing leaves) will aid or hinder your leaps, depending on whether you are jumping with or against the breeze. As you can imagine, this makes precise movement far more difficult than usual, and when combining the wind with trampoline-boosted jumps, you're bound to take a few tumbles into a bottomless pit.

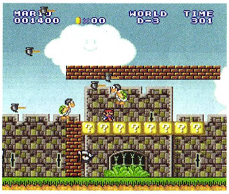
WELCOME TO REVERSE WARP ZONE!



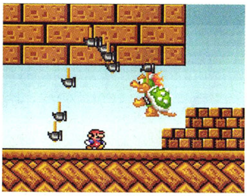
2

The Warp Zones in the original Super Mario Bros. were awesome. And how cool did you feel when you stumbled onto them? When playing The Lost Levels for the first time, many players try the same old tricks to discover Warp Zones and breeze through the game. Although The Lost Levels does contain Warp Zones, it also contains the dreaded Reverse Warp Zones. Imagine fighting through the game up to World 8 and accidentally stumbling into a Warp Zone. This would normally be a good thing, but this one sends you all the way back to World 5! Arrgh!

3 THE ULTIMATE CHALLENGE



Just getting through The Lost Levels's eight main worlds is tough enough, but only the best players will discover the five hidden worlds (each containing four levels). If you can complete the game without using any Warp Zones, you will unlock the extrachallenging World 9. Clearing World 9 opens up Worlds A, B, C, and D, which contain some of the most difficult platforming in the entire series. Your running, jumping, and swimming skills will be put to the ultimate test. If you manage to conquer the whole game, you have our respect.



FALSE BOWSERS

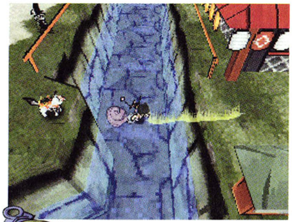
5

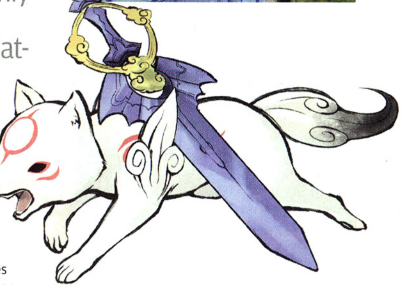
False Bowsers are not entirely new to The Lost Levels. After all, the Bowsers at the end of Worlds 1 through 7 in the original Super Mario Bros. weren't the real deal. In The Lost Levels, however, these fake fiends make a few unexpected appearances to throw you off your game. Just like in the first SMB, World 8-4 is the last of the standard worlds, and at the end of the stage, you must once again battle Bowser. Before reaching him, however, you are confronted with one of the False Bowsers. Luckily, you don't even need to defeat this imposter. Just run under him and make a mad dash for the real McCoy.

New Dog, Old Tricks

Okamiden—the unexpected sequel to Capcom's cult-hit action-RPG Okami—offers an amazingly faithful portrayal of the series's demon-haunted Japan.

Even with the final product on Japanese store shelves, it's hard to believe a follow-up to Okami is actually happening. The 2006 PlayStation 2 game was so well-regarded that many websites named it game of the year—and it sold so poorly that it earned the Guinness Book of World Records award for "least commercially successful winner of a game of the year award." Prospects for a sequel certainly weren't helped by the fact that the development team that created Okami left Capcom (to form PlatinumGames) before Okami was even released.



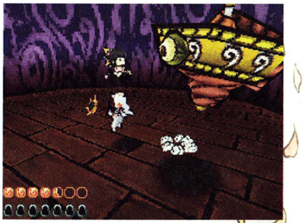


But Capcom managed to raise Okami's profile with a 2008 port for the Wii console, and even after years of cautioning fans not to expect a sequel, a new Okami continued to be a popular request. The game also had plenty of supporters within Capcom's rank and file, and director Kuniomi Matsushita had little trouble finding fans to help him secretly craft a demo and design document for a new Okami game. Producer Motohide Eshiro still vividly recalls the day, two years ago, when Matsushita first brought him the simple prototype software for the Nintendo DS system: "I was like, 'Wow, this is Okami on the DS! I can't believe I'm holding this!'" Making another Okami game suddenly didn't seem like such a bad idea.

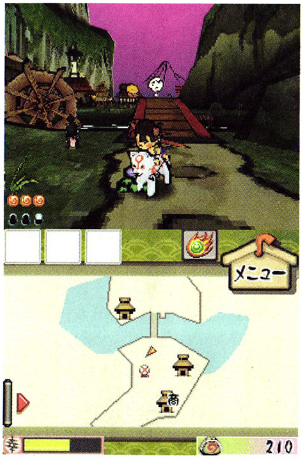
PUPPY LOVE

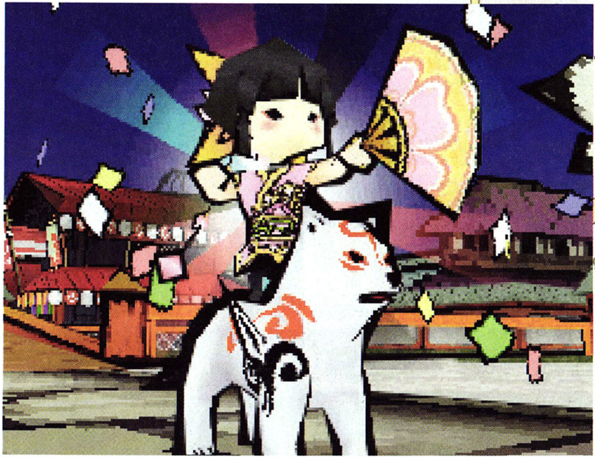
The first Okami starred Amaterasu, an ageless Japanese sun god who manifests as a majestic white wolf. Matsushita originally intended to use the same character, but was struggling to find a new direction for the game when one of the team's artists drew a picture of what Amaterasu's puppy would look like. The drawing was intended as a joke, but seeing the young wolf pup made everything snap into place for Matsushita. Not only was the character absurdly adorable, but the idea led directly to the new mechanic of fighting alongside companions (since a puppy couldn't save the world alone) and the emotionally resonant theme of heroes coming of age together. The divine pup was christened Chibiterasu, a fusion of *Amaterasu* and *chibi*, a Japanese word used for young children, dwarves, and small animals.

And so when evil befalls Japan (called Nippon in the game) a mere nine months after the events of the original Okami, it's Chibiterasu who answers the call. (Amaterasu remains indisposed following the events of the original title.) Chibiterasu has inherited the Celestial Brush and sun powers from his/her parent (as well as the annoying lack of a clearly defined gender), but is very much a puppy, always eager to jump up on a new friend or enjoy a nice scratch during lengthy conversation scenes. But at only a few months of



[Above] The demonic enemies in Okamiden range from the creepy to the bizarre.



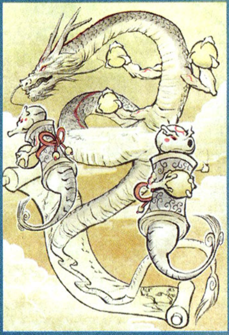


BY **CASEY LOE**

PUBLISHER: **CAPCOM** DEVELOPER: **CAPCOM** RELEASE: **MARCH 2011** DS

THE YOUNG CELESTIAL BRUSH GODS

YOMIGAMI



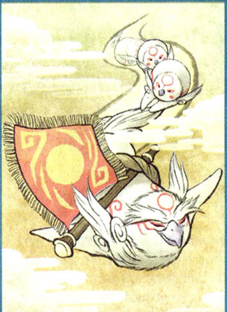
Yomigami's dragon hatchlings only barely peek out from their scrolls, but they can still offer Chibiterasu the power of Restoration. Whenever you encounter a damaged item, like a washed-out bridge or a broken barrel, you can draw in the missing piece to restore it to its proper form.

age, Chibiterasu is starting from square one; to claim the powers enjoyed by Amaterasu, players will have to learn them anew from the Celestial Brush Gods, each now represented by its own adorable chibi offspring. Okamiden may well have the cutest cast in the history of gaming.

Chibiterasu's youth and inexperience inspired Matsushita to create Okamiden's main gameplay hook: a series of similarly youthful partners who take over Issun's role from the first Okami as the hero's sidekick. But these new friends offer a lot more than comedy relief; a new Celestial Brush technique allows you to draw touch-screen paths to guide your partners over fragile bridges or through waterways that Chibiterasu can't cross, while Chibiterasu stomps floor switches or intercepts foes. When your partners finish their tasks, you can toss them onto Chibiterasu's back, where they'll deliver special attacks to stunned bad guys and serve as the mouthpieces for your party when interacting with other characters.

THE YOUNG CELESTIAL BRUSH GODS

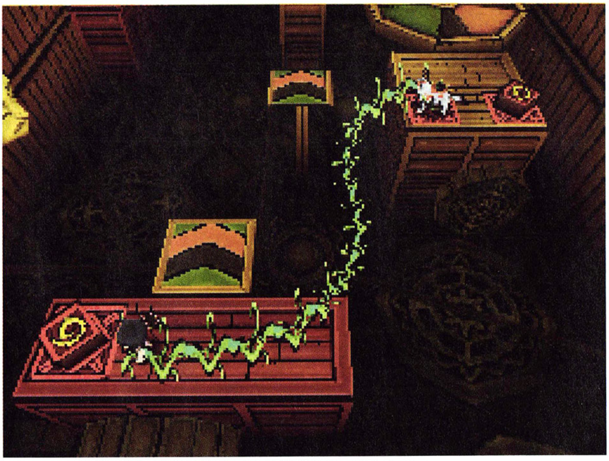
MICHIGAMI



The young chicks of the owl Michigami (which makes its debut in Okamiden) can teach Chibiterasu how to guide his partners with trails of light. This flexible power allows you to send your friends after items or safely through obstacle courses.

FAMILIAR HAUNTS

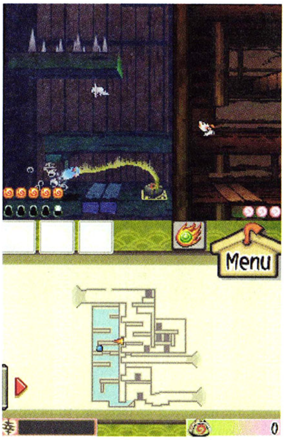
While the partner adds a whole new dimension to the game, most everything else about Okamiden should be instantly familiar to fans of Okami. The game is set in the same regions of Nippon, and the DS does a remarkable job of bringing familiar areas to life. Although the largest areas have been broken up into smaller chunks, they remain impressively vast and rich in detail, and

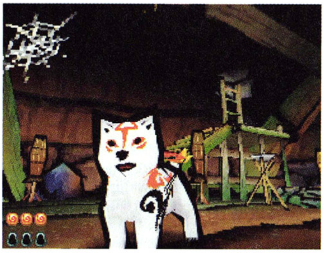


[Right] Partner Kagu can travel to places that Chibiterasu cannot. The Celestial Brush Vine technique can pull him to Kagu's position.

some re-create the terrain of Okami so faithfully that you can use maps from that game to find the same cherry trees, hidden caves, and off-the-path treasure chests in this one. But though only nine in-game months have elapsed, the land of Nippon has seen plenty of changes; the Agata Forest now lies deep underwater, while the new town of Yakushi has carved itself a home among the cliffs between Shinshu Field and Kamiki Village. Needless to say, having a map on the lower screen of the DS makes finding your way around easier than it ever was in the original.

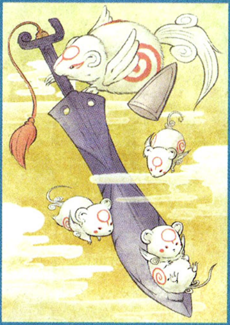
Additionally, the combat system in Okamiden has been refined and simplified. Battles still take place in separate arenas (although there are a few small foes to swat at as you explore), but all attacks now use a single button that dishes out simple multipart combos. The strategic depth comes from your Celestial Brush abilities, which you can use to cut down vulnerable foes, place bombs amidst your adversaries, and even knock away projectiles in midflight. The system's touch screen offers the finest implementation of the Celestial Brush yet, allowing players to draw





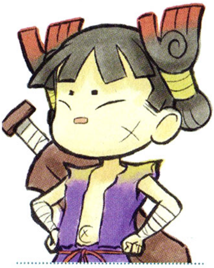
THE YOUNG CELESTIAL BRUSH GODS

TACHIGAMI



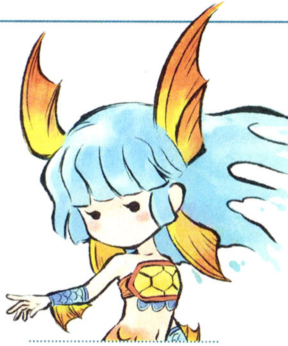
The tiny mouse with the giant sword has passed its mighty blade on to its even tinier mouse pups. Their Powerslash allows you to sever boulders, signposts, and even foes with a simple horizontal line. In combat, it can now be used to bounce projectiles back to their throwers.

CHIBITERASU'S NEW PARTNERS



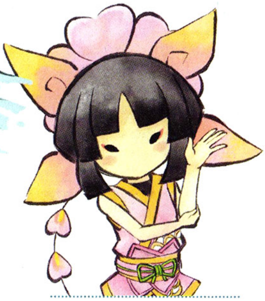
KUNI

Kuni is the son of original Okami characters Susano and Kushi—and yes, the game does explain why a child who didn't exist nine months ago is already several years old. Being the son of Japan's greatest warrior weighs heavily on young Kuni, and he tries hard to live up to his father's reputation. He's always the first to valiantly offer help to a young lady in need.... It's just the follow-through he has trouble with. As an inveterate coward, Kuni is caught in the midst of an internal struggle between the person he is and the one he wants to be. Just the sort of thing a good old video game adventure is proven to cure!



NANAMI

After being captured by the humans of Agata Village and used as a sacrifice to the local demon lord, Nanami developed something of a grudge toward humanity. But when one of Chibiterasu's human friends needs Nanami's help, the pup will have to convince her to turn the other cheek. Nanami comes in mighty handy; as a mermaid, she can cross the rivers, lakes, and other water sources that act as impassible barriers for Chibiterasu and Kuni. She has such an affinity for water that her own hair generates the stuff; when you need to douse a flame and there's no stream nearby, just draw a line from her hair to the target!

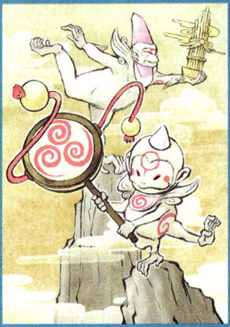


KAGU

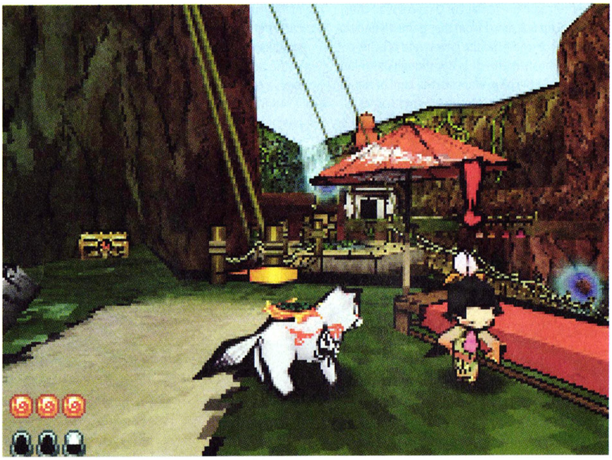
Kagu has a special sensitivity to the supernatural that allows her to see Chibiterasu's true nature as a divine being—and she's not even remotely impressed. As Nippon's most popular child actress, her only goal is to clear away the demons that have taken over her family's playhouse and return to her rightful place on stage. If that means saddling up a god and riding it in battle, so be it. Kagu is a handful, but partnering with her comes with plenty of perks. Her combo-topping fan projectile attacks come in handy when battling multiple foes, and her divine sight allows her to see and cross invisible bridges that elude even Chibiterasu.

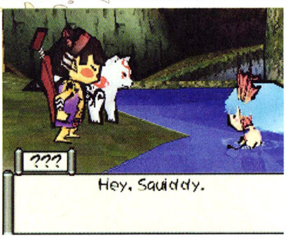
THE YOUNG CELESTIAL BRUSH GODS

SAKIGAMI



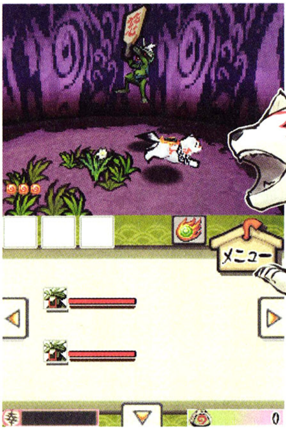
The first heir of the Hanagami monkeys from Okami will teach you the life-restoring Greensprout technique. Circle a tree to make it burst into bloom, or circle a pool of corruption to purify it away. Only with this crucial technique can you lift the veil of darkness from Nippon.





???

Hey, Squiddy.



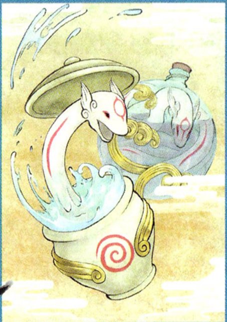
perfect circles and zigzagging lines far more precisely than a Control Stick or the Wii Remote controller would allow. The virtual ink even feels real, pooling in richer, thicker lines when you drag the stylus more slowly over the screen.

Eshiro's team also did some fine-tuning to the series' RPG mechanics. For example, you still earn experience points in the form of Praise, colorful bubbles of happiness that are unlocked by purifying corrupted parts of the world or by doing favors for nonplayable characters. But when your Praise bar fills, you now gain ink and health capacity upgrades automatically. Okamiden uses the same system of miniquests as its predecessor, although instead of being based on the hunt-down-the-enemy "wanted lists" from the original game, Okamiden has you mostly helping NPCs find their lost and stolen items. Though a subtle change, this is a welcome one, making treasure-hunting a lot more rewarding and cutting some of the repetitive combat out the game.

Another simplification has removed the

THE YOUNG CELESTIAL BRUSH GODS

NUREGAMI



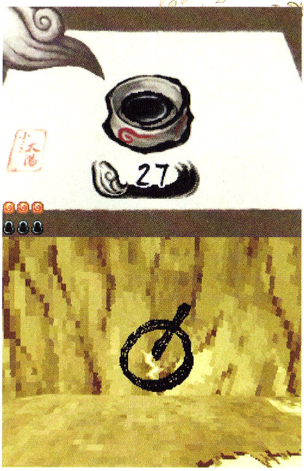
The waterspout ability of the young Nuregami allows you to control the flow of water, draining it out of flooded pools and into dry ones or onto flames. There's powerful synergy between this technique and Nanami, Chibiterasu's mermaid partner.

original game's subweapons, but a new system allows players to collect materials by defeating enemies in certain ways, and use them to boost the attributes of Chibiterasu's three base weapons. Okamiden may not have quite the depth of its predecessor (a game that was so packed with content that it was often criticized for its excessive length), but its streamlined mechanics make it much easier to pick up and play, and they make for a much faster-paced adventure.

TENDER MOMENTS

One of Eshiro's first suggestions to the team was that they hire novelist Yukinori Kitajima to handle the game's script. In Japan, the writer is famous for his young-adult novels and for writing the never-localized adventure game 428: In the Blocked City, Shibuya. (He also wrote the story to the iPhone game Chaos Rings.) While Kitajima was himself a big fan of the original Okami, he brings a very different perspective to Okamiden. Instead of focusing on world-in-peril drama or the sweeping themes of the series mythology, Okamiden is a more sentimental story, centered on the personal challenges facing its young heroes. More than any of the game's new mechanics or refinements, the focus on characters creates a unique flavor that sets Okamiden apart from its predecessor.

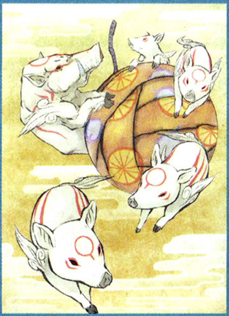
The decision to have the game take place only nine months after Okami is another interesting one, and one that proved to be a tremendous challenge for the writers. "If the game took place 10, 20 years after



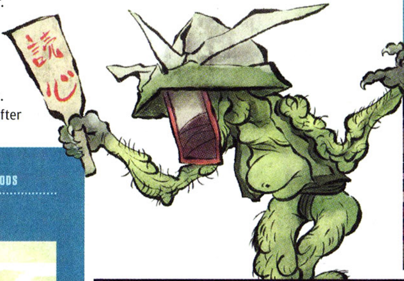
[Above] The precise DS stylus lets players place cherry bombs exactly where they want them.

THE YOUNG CELESTIAL BRUSH GODS

BAKUGAMI

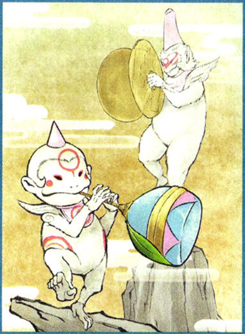


Bakugami's piglets are now running the show, and will teach Chibiterasu to employ the famous cherry bomb. Use it to blow passages through cracked walls or to make a powerful explosive in combat. You can now better control the position of your bomb by drawing it larger to place it closer to the camera.

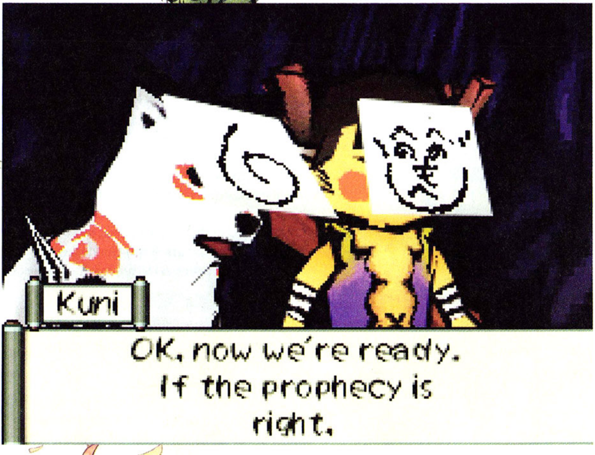


THE YOUNG CELESTIAL BRUSH GODS

HANAGAMI



The second heir of the Hanagami monkeys teaches the Vine technique from the original game. Use the vine as a grappling hook to pull Chibiterasu and his partners up to distant plants, or in a new twist, to pull Chibiterasu toward his partners.



Kuni

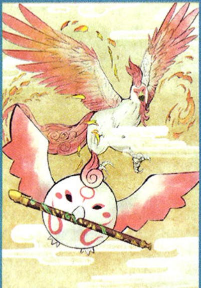
OK, now we're ready.
If the prophecy is
right.

the original Okami, the whole world would be completely different, and there wouldn't be anything intrinsically interesting about it," explains Eshiro. "Because it's only nine months later, there are a lot of things that stand out as being out of place from what players knew from the previous game."

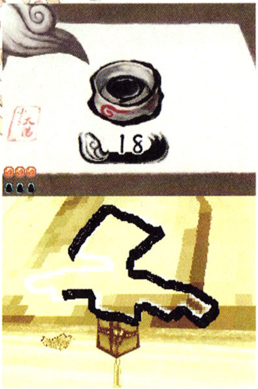
But players who passed on the original Okami needn't worry, as the game has been carefully built to stand on its own four feet. With a charismatic new hero, a standalone story, and a gentle difficulty curve, it's a perfect entry point to a series that might have a bright future after all.

THE YOUNG CELESTIAL BRUSH GODS

MOEGAMI



Moegami's fledgling heir would make for one heck of a Pokémon. But the young phoenix is content to teach you the power of Inferno, allowing you to make fire flow like water from torch to torch. Use this technique to solve puzzles, fry foes, and melt blocks of ice.



Capcom's New Alpha Wolf

Motohide Eshiro, director of Onimusha 2 and producer of the Ace Attorney series, explains why he made time to helm a DS revival of Okami.

NINTENDO POWER In our last interview you mentioned that you wanted to work on Okamiden because you really liked the original Okami. What is it you found so appealing about this world and this style of gameplay?

MOTOHIDE ESHIRO I guess, mainly, it's the art style and the graphics. Maybe I just like the Japanese art style because I am Japanese, but the sumi-ink design—I think it is really well done. It's an art style that is familiar to Japanese people, so it's just very comfortable to look at. Also the character designs—I think they are really cute. All the characters have these unique quirks about them. All the [supporting] characters in the game were pretty unique and I think this time Chibiterasu—the little wolf dog—he is pretty cute as well.

The Okami series allows us to showcase a Japanese fantasy, if you will; a different mythology that people might not be familiar with. On top of that, I'm a big fan of the Zelda series. I like how elements from the Zelda series you find in Okami—the puzzle elements, the action elements—are really good, I think.

Speaking of those cuter characters—the younger characters—I was wondering how that ties into the overall underlying theme of Okamiden?

I think the main theme of Okamiden is the bonds that children form with each other. You have Chibiterasu as the main character, and then he meets different partners in the game, so it's about his relationships to those different characters. Over the course of the game they have to overcome many difficulties, and work together to defeat the bosses. I think that just flavors the whole game, including the story and its various gameplay elements, so if you want a theme for Okamiden or a key word, it would probably be *friendship*.

In the game's storyline, how on Earth did so much occur in the nine months between Okami and Okamiden?

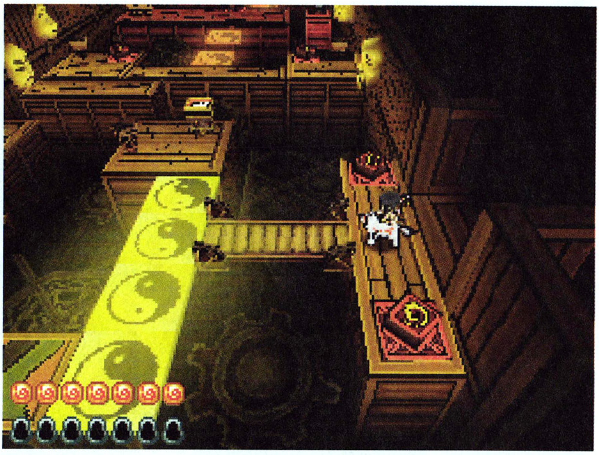
We are able to explain those things as part of the story line in the game, and I think that's where it gets interesting. Like, for example, Kuni [the son of Susano and Kushi who got together at the end of the original game]—why is he already a young child if this game only takes place nine months after the first game? Things like that you'll find out about as you play the game. It starts out with some mystery elements to hook the player, to get them interested in figuring out what's changed or gone wrong since the events of the last game.

So what would you like players to especially take note of as they are playing the game?

The first thing I would like the players to focus on is the Celestial Brush mechanic in the game, because I think it is greatly improved from what we had in the previous version. For example, when you were trying to draw the cherry bombs in the PS2 and Wii versions, you weren't able to place them so accurately. But now, using the stylus, you can just draw on the screen whenever and exactly wherever you want them. It's really useful in all of the boss fights, and even the normal battles, to be able to use the Celestial Brush exactly as you want to.

I also think the partners in the game are key, not just for the story, but as a key element of the gameplay as well. Chibi and his partners have to work together to overcome different things. There's a puzzle-solving element to figure out how you can combine your powers to overcome different problems in the game.

Also, the graphics. I hope players really look at the graphics and see how we were able to create the whole atmosphere of the original Okami game on the DS. I think fans of that game will be really pleased with how close we've been able to come



[Above] Kagu's demon-haunted playhouse is one of several new areas that Chibiterasu can visit.

Issun
Oh, no! There might be some evil spirits here!

to that on the DS.

Last but not least is the music. I think we did a really outstanding job exploiting the full capabilities of the DS to get quality sound for the signature Okami music.

The game came out recently in Japan, right? What do you think about the reception it has received so far?

Well, one of the things about the game that a lot of fans knew, especially in Japan, is that the original designers of the first Okami game aren't working on it. A lot of them were worried about how this was going to turn out. But once they got their hands on it, from just the reports coming into Capcom and things I've read myself, it seems that they are really happy with what we did. They are ecstatic that we were able to transition the world of Okami to Okamiden on the DS, and so I consider that to be a really good response from the fans.

What was the best part of the development process of this game?

I think the moment in development that stands out most was at the very beginning when Matsushita brought his little demo cartridge to me on the DS, and made his presentation about how he wanted to bring Okami to the DS. And so...I just started playing it, and I saw Chibiterasu running around onscreen, and that's basically all it was—just a tech demo basically—and I was... really excited when he showed me that.

What was the most challenging part of the development process?

There were really just so many challenges while making this game. So many I can't even think of them all. One was the graphics, because you're limited with the number of polygons on the DS, compared to the previous systems that it was on. Also, with the character animation, we couldn't have the same range of motion we did previously, so we had to figure out which motions were the most important to use and how to re-create those quirky, cute moments that the characters are known for. Aside from that, we had to struggle with the frame rate to make sure that there was no slowdown as the game was played. Lots of things like that. I also talked about the sound as well. Just trying to make sure we could exploit the full capabilities so it sounded like the orchestrated music people were used to for the previous chapter of the game. I guess it would be safe to say there wasn't anything that *wasn't* a challenge on this game. For each challenge we had to come up with a different trick to get around it, and that was the most interesting part about making it.

Have you given any thought to how a sequel might be on the Nintendo 3DS?

For me personally the Nintendo 3DS offers a lot of unique opportunities, and I'm really interested in being able to do something with the Nintendo 3DS. So right now we are just concentrating on getting Okamiden out there, getting it into the public consciousness—not just in Japan, but the world over—and hoping the fans really take a liking to the game. The fans are what's really important, so if the fans come back and say, "Hey, we enjoyed Okamiden. You've got to put it on the Nintendo 3DS next!" then that's definitely something we can talk about.

Is there anything else you want to say about the game?

The first thing I want to say is we'll be digitally releasing a demo that will be coming out shortly, but I want people to know that that is really only a taste, a hint, of what the game has to offer. We just tried to cram a lot of different things about what makes Okamiden fun into the demo, but it doesn't give you a full experience the way the game will. So it's just a little flavor, so I hope if people get to play the digital demo that they like it, and that they'll want to try out the real version of the game. Also, to the fans of the original Okami, I understand if you have concerns about us bringing Okami to the DS with Okamiden, but I want you to try it out and see for yourselves how good of a job we've done at re-creating the world of Okami on the DS.

Finally, as I've said earlier, I think we've got a really good script for this game. I think the story has a lot of dramatic changes. It's a moving story, I think maybe even more so than the original game, so when you play this game, I'm pretty sure that you're going to like it.

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Power Profiles

DATE OF BIRTH
April 29, 1977

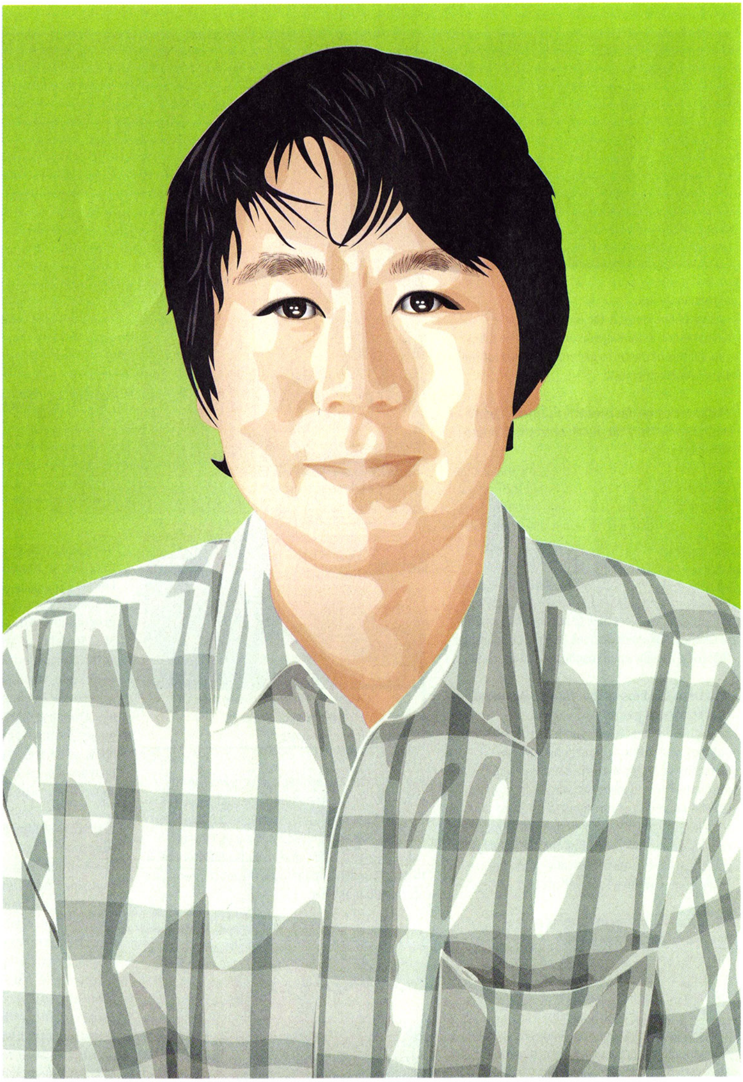
BIRTHPLACE
Ono, Fukui Prefecture, Japan

POSITION
Programmer; founder of Studio Pixel

BEST KNOWN FOR
Creating Cave Story, liking cats

FAVORITE FOOD
Udon

CURRENT PROJECTS
Cave Story (DSiWare), plus other secret projects



Daisuke "Pixel" Amaya

ILLUSTRATION BY CHRISTINA EMPEDOCLES

In an era when so many video games are published by big corporations with the ultimate goal of making massive profits, it's nice to see that independent developers can still survive and thrive. One such developer is Daisuke Amaya—better known as Pixel—who spent years designing and programming Cave Story almost single-handedly. He didn't do it for money (he gave away the original version of the game for free), and he didn't do it because it was his full-time job—he simply did it for the love of creating games. The effort paid off; Cave Story turned into a cult sensation, and the game has since found success in its enhanced WiiWare form, proving that great games can come from anywhere as long as its creators are devoted and passionate about what they do. We can't wait to see what Pixel comes up with next.

NINTENDO POWER **How did you originally get into video games?**

PIXEL I fell in love with the Famicom [the Japanese version of the NES] when I was a kid, and it just never went away. Once I learned how to develop games, it was no longer as important for me to actually enter the industry. What I really wanted to do was to make games, and not necessarily to make a career out of game development.

So game programming was just a hobby at first?

I studied computers at a computer school. In addition to programming, I was also interested in data modeling and computer graphics. I also made some websites. At the time I didn't really have a purpose, but was studying because it was fun. I hadn't put much serious thought into a career yet.

When I was going to computer school, I lived in the dorms. I learned programming by chance from a friend who lived next door. I read some books on programming because I wanted to make some games, but they turned out to be useless since I couldn't understand most of the terminology. I'm not very good with books to begin with. My friend could answer any question I had. I'm grateful for his help, even to this day.

How did you end up deciding you wanted to make video games as a full-time endeavor?

A little while ago, my company was hit by the economic depression. That's when I first began to think about leaving my job for a career in games. I felt if I was going to give this a try, the sooner the better.

Where did the nickname Pixel come from?

The word pixel refers to a picture cell. I chose this name because I love pixel-art images. The philosophy behind this name is "game development, one pixel at a time."

Since your name is Pixel and all your games are 2D, what are your thoughts on polygonal games?

There are many 2D games that I like, but now the market is dominated by 3D games. So I do play 3D games as well. I'm drawn to 3D-game development, but the number of elements involved increases exponentially with things like modeling, texturing, and animation.

What made you want to make a game like Cave Story?

I didn't start off intending to make Cave Story, but as I developed the game it became the Cave Story that we now know. Everything came together by chance as development progressed.

How did Cave Story evolve during the course of development?

At first, the concept of money and shops existed in Cave Story. Players could earn money by defeating enemies, then purchase weapons and ammo at shops.... Then one day, I realized it would be much more fun if ammo was unlimited. I realized this after the shops and money had been incorporated into the game. Shops became meaningless once weapons became unlimited, and I removed the shops and money from the game altogether.

There were also some big changes in terms of characters and story. In the beginning, enemy designs were all based on soap. I'd put eyes on a soap-shaped body, and then expand on the design by adding propellers or wings. I chose soap because I love bubbles, but also because programming is much easier with block-shaped characters.

By the time I had built the game to this point, it had already been two years since development began. Then I decided to show the half-developed Cave Story to someone I dreaded showing it to: the friend who taught me how to program games. He had very high standards when it came to how good or bad games were. I didn't want to show it to him, because he would always be right on point with his criticism, and I would lose confidence every time I talked to him. On top of that, it annoyed me that he was usually more concerned than I was about the future of my games.

My friend did give me some praise, but went on to point out areas where I had made some compromises, criticize the specs, and point out that the game was somewhat confusing overall. I understood what he said. I fought back with, "I know what you're saying, but this is the best I can do," but he came back with, "I know you can do it." That was when I decided to redo over half the system, and completely rewrite the scenario. I finished the game about three years later.

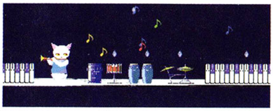
What games served as the biggest inspirations for Cave Story?

I think that every detail in Cave Story is connected

"I think that every detail in Cave Story is connected to another game..."

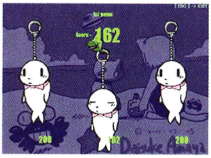
GAMEOGRAPHY

Cave Story is far and away Pixel's most recognizable work, but he's created a number of other titles, all of which were designed as PC freeware. He also contributed a "Big Name Game" to WarioWare D.I.Y. that was based on Ikachan.



RAIN
1998, PC
CREATOR

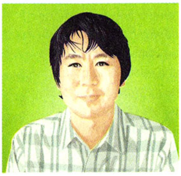
IKACHAN
2000, PC
CREATOR



AZARASHI
2001, PC
CREATOR

MEGANE
2003, PC
CREATOR

Power Profiles



to another game in some way. Ninja Kid's influence can be seen in the way small 16x16 characters move around against vast stages and large bosses. I love pixel-art bubbles, so they make an appearance in Cave Story too; that might come from Bubble Bobble. I'm pretty sure Metroid and [Japanese action-RPG] Romancia have affected the way you advance in the game by going back and forth on the same map multiple times. Metal Slug was one of the games I was really into when making Cave Story, so the vertical shooting, the machine-gun trail, as well as the animation in the scenes where Gaudi of the Labyrinth and Mesa Bute of the Sanctuary get defeated, are all influenced by it. Items are in treasure chests probably because of Dragon Quest and other RPGs in general.

What would you say the advantage is to making a game virtually solo as opposed to doing it as part of a larger group or corporation?
The greatest advantage is that I can make adjustments without anyone's approval. At times I would make three adjustments and ultimately scrap the idea. I would have felt bad to make someone else deal with that.

How has the proliferation of the Internet and digital distribution helped you as a game maker?
It's a big help that an individual like myself can send a game out into the world just by paying my Internet bill. On the flip side, I think it's unfortunate that things that players look forward to in games, like a good ending, can be spoiled on the Internet.

How has the input of the online fan community influenced you?
A game's difficulty level is something I always struggle with. I know everything there is to know about the game, so even if I think something is simple, other players might find it very difficult. I ultimately settled with a difficulty level that I personally felt was a bit easy, and of course, some players wrote to say they wanted something more challenging.

Given this feedback, even though I wanted to wrap up development, I created a tough hidden stage (Sanctuary) and set the difficulty level to near-impossible heights. I received feedback from a player who enjoyed the stage and wanted a time-attack mode, so I added that as well.

> *"Even with cheap ingredients, you can entertain people if you're creative."*

What would your advice be to fledgling independent game-makers who want to see people playing their games?
Making games is pretty similar to cooking. Even with cheap ingredients, you can entertain people if you're creative. Just don't forget to taste it yourself before serving it to others.

What kinds of projects do you see yourself working on in the future? Would you want to do a Cave Story 2, or would you rather work on something original?
I'm looking into developing something for the iPhone. Players have higher hopes for a sequel, so it's a lot less pressure to create something new, away from Cave Story. It would be great to be able to answer fans' expectations with a sequel, but that's easier said than done.

How have things in the gaming industry changed since you became involved with it?
I can only speak for the gaming industry from the perspective of an individual gamer, but I think that the scale of games has expanded. Amazing games are being developed...and I am moved just watching them.

What do you think you'd be doing if you weren't making games?
Probably drawing, composing songs, or creating motion pictures.

What aspect of creating a video game do you enjoy the most?
The first time that I get to see the characters on-screen, in motion.

When you are stumped by a particularly difficult problem while creating a game, what's your process for working through it?
When developing a game alone, there are many things to work on, including the music, graphics, program, story, etc. So it's usually possible to progress in at least one of those areas. There is a lot of busywork that needs to get done as well. Otherwise, when I'm tired I rest. Once I'm feeling better, something will move forward.

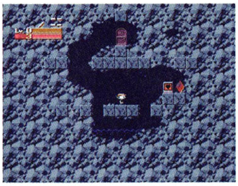
What game creators do you admire or respect, and why?
There are many games, songs, and works of art that I like, but I don't know much about their creators. Recently I finished Shadow of the Colossus for PS2 and thought it was an amazing game. Even in an age in which a character's polygon count has increased exponentially, I have yet to see a game with movements as impressive as Shadow of the Colossus.

Whose works in other forms of media, such as film or literature, do you admire and enjoy?
I love Pixar movies. I went to watch *Toy Story 3* in the movie theater recently.

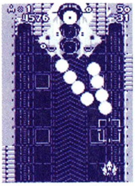
What is your favorite hobby or pastime?
Lately, I've taken up fishing. I've only gone four times so far. I go to the docks and catch small fish. Game development is no longer just a hobby for me, so fishing has become my new hobby.

If you could have one superpower, what would it be and why?
I would like to fly with my own wings, like a big bird. I've had dreams where I'm flying, and it felt amazing.

GAMEOGRAPHY



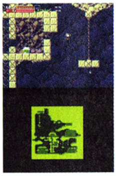
CAVE STORY
2004, PC
CREATOR



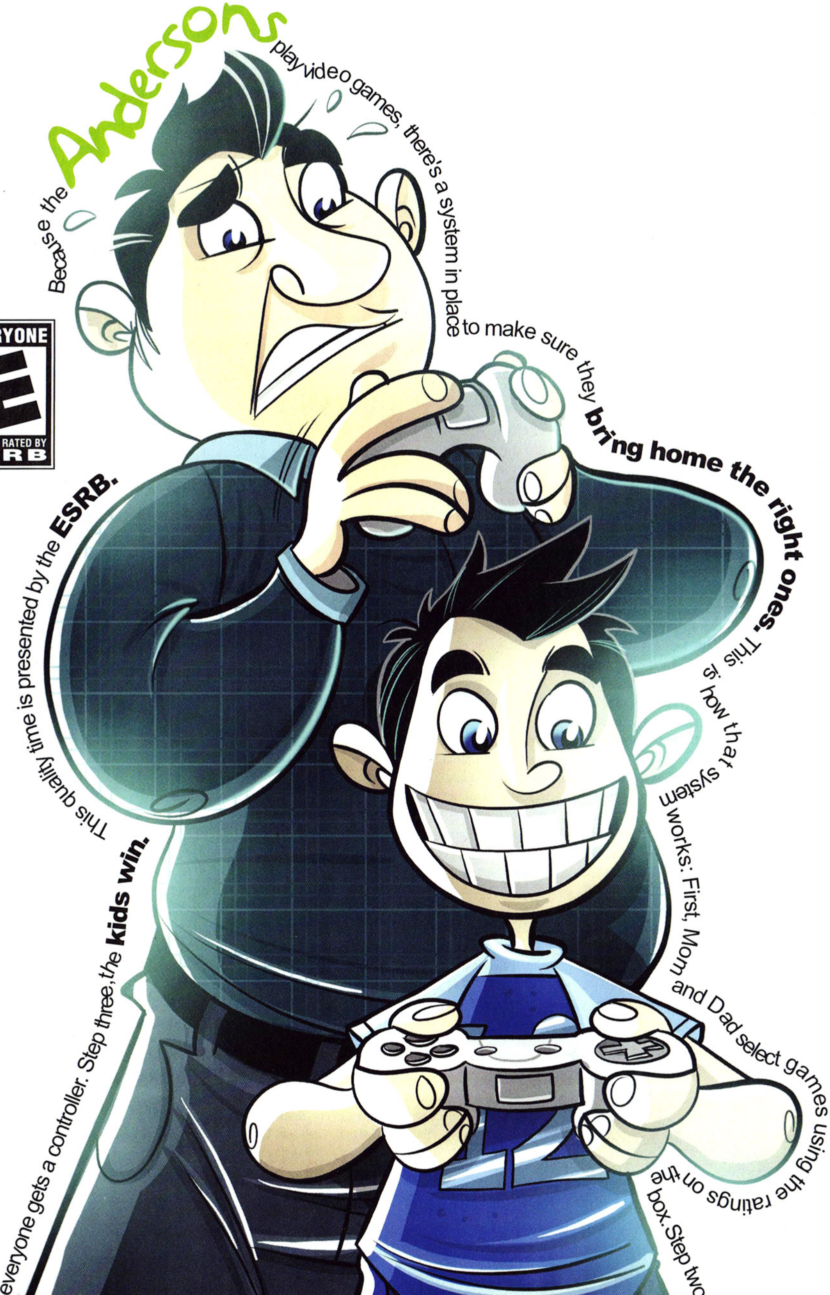
GUXT
2007, PC
CREATOR

AKANTARES
2009, PC
CREATOR

CAVE STORY
2010, WiiWARE
ART DIRECTOR, ORIGINAL CREATOR



CAVE STORY
2010, DSiWARE
ART DIRECTOR, ORIGINAL CREATOR

Because the **Andersons** play video games, there's a system in place to make sure they **bring home the right ones.** This is how that system works: First, Mom and Dad select games using the ratings on the box. Step two, everyone gets a controller. Step three, the **kids win.** This quality time is presented by the **ESRB.**

EVERYONE
E
CONTENT RATED BY
ESRB

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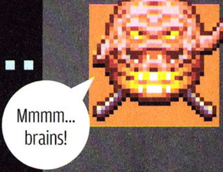
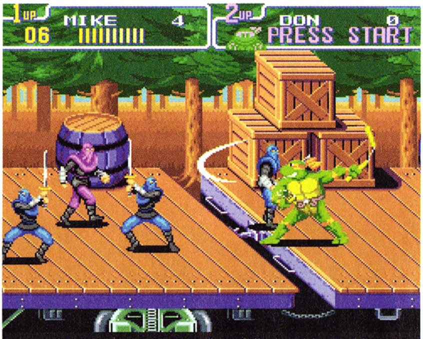

Mmmm... brains!

Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles IV: Turtles in Time

Being a ninja is about more than eating pizza and yelling "cowabunga!" It's also about time travel.

PLATFORM: **SUPER NES**
PUBLISHER: **KONAMI**
DEVELOPER: **KONAMI**
RELEASE DATE: **AUGUST 1992**
COVERED IN ISSUES: **35, 39, 44, 51**
SPAN OF YEARS THE TURTLES TRAVELED THROUGH TIME: **2,500,002,100**



In one of the oft-forgotten battles of the Civil War, Michaelangelo fought a robot-ninja army on the back of a speeding train. Who knew?

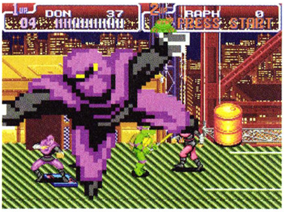
In the early 1990s the Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles were at the top of their game. The pizza-eating amphibians had action figures, a hit cartoon show, live-action movies, and—certainly not least of all—a series of popular video games published by Konami.

Based on the turtles' second arcade game, Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles IV: Turtles in Time was all-out action at its finest. At its most basic level, the game was about picking your favorite turtle and beating the heck out of any Foot Clan villains foolish enough to get in your way. You could ostensibly get through the entire game by simply wailing on the attack button, but TMNT IV had a lot of depth for a beat-'em-up. You could perform slide kicks, tackles, several kinds of jumping attacks, character-specific special moves (which drained your health), and multiple types of throws—including grabbing a Foot Soldier and swinging him back and forth to obliterate anything nearby, and tossing a bad guy straight into the screen (one of the coolest uses ever of the Super NES console's Mode 7 technology).

In addition to featuring nonstop in-your-face combat supported by fantastic graphics and music, TMNT IV boasted fun levels that exuded the same lighthearted sensibilities that had made the turtles such a hit on TV. As the game's title implied, the heroes found themselves warped to various places throughout time, including the prehistoric era, a 16th-century pirate ship, the Wild West, and the far-flung future of 2020, before returning to the "present" of 1992. Each level had enemies specific to its setting, such as dino-riding soldiers in prehistoric times and bosses Bebop and Rocksteady dressed up as buccaneers on the pirate level.

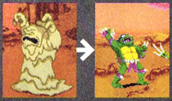
One of the most surprising things about the Super NES game was that it was actually better than the arcade version. Alongside better controls and various new options, the game delivered a brand-new level (the bad guys' base, the Technodrome) and a few new bosses. The one thing the Super NES version didn't have was the ability for four players to play simultaneously, but it did support two-player co-op, which was a blast.

Nearly two decades after its release, Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles IV holds up as—appropriately enough—a thoroughly timeless action experience. **—CHRIS H.**

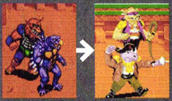


WHO'S THE BOSS?

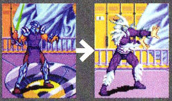
The Super NES version of Turtles in Time featured several changes and enhancements when compared to its arcade counterpart. Some of the most notable involved the game's bosses.



Rising from the Muck
In the arcade version the boss of the prehistoric world was a giant mud monster. In the Super NES version he's replaced with evil mutant turtle Slash (who's ridiculously tough).



Mutants Ahoy!
Mutant monsters Tokka and Rahzar were the bosses of the arcade version's Skull and Crossbones stage, but on the Super NES they were replaced with TMNT mainstays Bebop and Rocksteady. Tokka and Rahzar were relocated to the new Technodrome level.



Prepare to Be Shredded
The final boss in the arcade version was, unsurprisingly, the turtles' archnemesis, Shredder. In the Super NES version, however, he was upgraded to the even-more-powerful Super Shredder.

HAVE A FAVORITE CLASSIC GAME YOU'D LIKE TO SEE REVISITED?
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Because Jess plays video games the ESRB (that's the Entertainment Software Rating Board) understands that some games aren't right for everyone.
Just like movies, every game has a rating. And those ratings come from the ESRB.
TEEN
T
CONTENT RATED BY
ESRB

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MATURE 17+
M
CONTENT RATED BY
ESRB

HELLO
my name is
Chris

This is Chris, hardcore gamer. He's been playing games ever since he could grip a controller. When he was growing up, **his parents used the ESRB ratings** to choose the games that were right for him. One day he'll use the ratings to **decide what games his kids play** – he just doesn't know it yet.

REVIEWS

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After 14 long years, Nintendo's superstar simians finally revisit their finest franchise. Is Donkey Kong Country Returns worth the wait?

Prime Primates

DONKEY KONG COUNTRY RETURNS

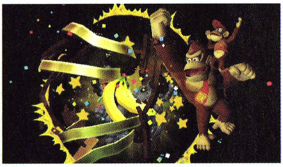
RATING: 8.5

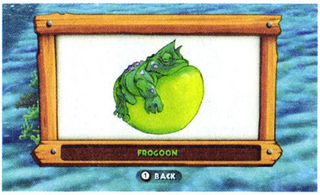
PLATFORM: **Wii**
PUBLISHER: **NINTENDO**
DEVELOPER: **RETRO STUDIOS**
ESRB: **EVERYONE**

I propose that all game publishers come together to make a pact: that great franchises will never again be left to languish in limbo. While playing Donkey Kong Country Returns for this review, I kept thinking that the only bad thing about the game is that it took 14 long years to get here. And after experiencing this spectacular simian adventure, I absolutely can't wait 14 more years for the next one.

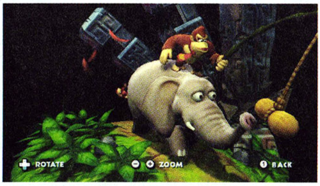
For those old enough to remember the series's original Super NES trilogy, the Wii revival will be a nostalgic trip back to a simpler time of 16-bit side-scrolling goodness. But series newcomers should quickly feel at home as well, especially those familiar with New Super Mario Bros. Wii, another Nintendo-series refresh that provides a similar jump in graphics and features. Both games take a back-to-basics approach, feature eight worlds of stages accessible via a world map, offer compelling rewards for tracking down collectible items, and introduce co-op multiplayer. And believe it or not, the supertalented Donkey Kong Country Returns development team at Retro Studios has crafted a platformer that can stand toe-to-toe with the latest from Nintendo's princely plumber.

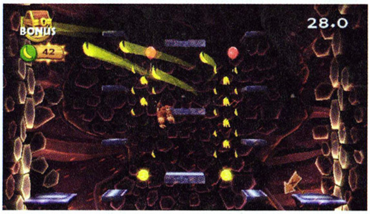
There are, of course, differences between the two games. True to its roots, Donkey Kong Country Returns moves at a slower, more plodding pace than New Super Mario Bros. Wii, and DK's hulking frame makes his movements less sharp and precise than Mario's.





[Above and below] The road to 100% completion is paved with goodies like artwork and dioramas.





The difference in style certainly fits the characters, and there's nothing at all wrong with the way the big ape handles, but I personally prefer the plumber's snappier, sharper stunts. Donkey Kong Country Returns is also a lot harder, which is saying something since New Super Mario Bros. Wii can be pretty darn challenging at times. This, again, is in keeping with past Donkey Kong Country titles, so fans will likely be up for the stiff challenge. The game does, unfortunately, rely on trial-and-error gameplay fairly often, though—especially during mine-cart and rocket-barrel stages, where there is little time to react to upcoming obstacles if you don't know what's in store. But somehow, I never minded much. Even when struggling with stages that cost me dozens of lives, there's a satisfaction in showing steady improvement and getting just a little farther with each try. When you do master a stage, it makes you feel like a superstar. If you run out of patience or get completely stumped, the game will offer to take over and play itself past the tricky parts. This feature works just like the Super Guide in New Super Mario Bros. Wii: you can retake control partway through a level or have the game finish the stage and unlock the next one, but in either case the computer-controlled Donkey Kong won't collect K-O-N-G Letters or Puzzle Pieces, so you can't fully master the game by taking shortcuts. Expert players can also spend extra time taking Time Attack runs through each level and working toward 100% completion in order to unlock all of the game's bonus artwork, music tracks, dioramas, and each world's megachallenging Temple level. Doing it all comes pretty close to impossible for the average player, so pros will have plenty of opportunities to test their might.

DONKEY GONE

While Donkey Kong Country Returns brings back the core elements that made the series so good, not everything from the original Super NES trilogy has returned. Here are some of the most notable omissions.

SWIMMING
Swimming stages go back to the very first Donkey Kong Country, but none appear in Donkey Kong Country Returns.

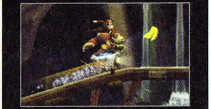
THE DK CREW
Don't expect to see Dixie Kong, Kiddy Kong, Candy Kong, Funky Kong, Swanky Kong, Wrinkly Kong, or any other Kong besides Donkey, Diddy, and Cranky.

ANIMAL BUDDIES
Only Rambi the Rhino returns, leaving such characters as Expresso the Ostrich, Enguarde the Swordfish, Winky the Frog, Squitter the Spider, Rattly the Rattlesnake, Clapper the Seal, and Ellie the Elephant out in the cold.

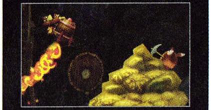
THE KREMLINGS
Perhaps the game's biggest departure is the dismissal of the series's long-running villains. To be honest, we don't miss them.

UP FOR A CHALLENGE?

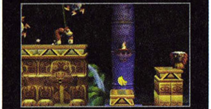
If you drool at the prospect of a tough challenge, you'll need to wear a bib while playing Donkey Kong Country Returns. Here are a few of the game's most daunting tasks.



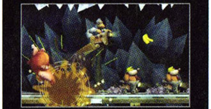
MINE CARTS
As longtime Donkey Kong Country fans know, clearing these speedy rollercoaster-like areas requires a lot of memorization, lives, and patience.



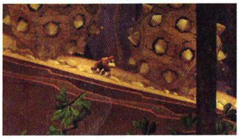
ROCKET BARRELS
These segments aren't as fast-paced as the mine-cart areas, but the Rocket Barrel is tough to steer, particularly when obstacles pop out unexpectedly.



TEMPLE STAGES
Collecting all the K-O-N-G Letters for every stage in a world will unlock a bonus Temple level, which offers that world's ultimate challenge for pro players.



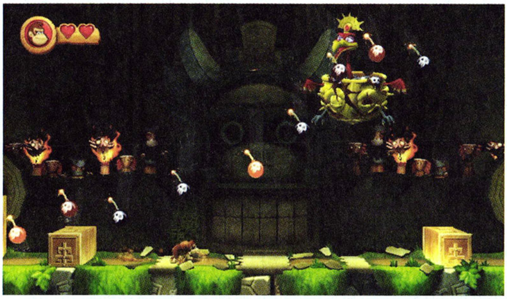
HELP IS ON THE WAY!
Starting to feel intimidated? Don't be. If you ever get *too* stuck, you can call on a silver, computer-controlled Donkey Kong to get you through.

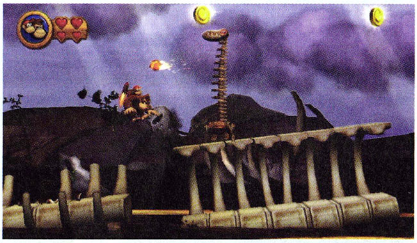


The basic flow of the game has you leaping over hazards, jumping on or rolling through enemies, pounding the ground to destroy boulders or trigger changes in the environment, climbing grassy walls and ceilings, and uncovering hidden goodies by bursting open plant pods or blowing on patches of weeds. When Diddy Kong is found in a level, he hops on Donkey Kong's back to provide extra hang time with his Barrel Jet, extends Donkey Kong's roll by running along on top of him, and doubles the number of times the big ape can be hit. All of their moves work and feel great, with one minor exception: a well-timed second press of the jump button can bounce Donkey Kong off an enemy and high into the air. But when Diddy is on the big ape's back, that same button press triggers the Barrel Jet and screws with the timing of the high jump. This nuance can be overcome, but it still cost me plenty of lives in areas where the game demands split-second mastery of both low and high jumps. Back on the plus side, both of the game's control options—the combination of the Wii Remote and Nunchuk controllers or just the remote alone, held sideways—work great. In my experience, playing the game NES-style and using the Control Pad made the controls a little more precise, but it sure is fun to swing the remote and Nunchuk alternately to trigger Donkey Kong's ground pound.

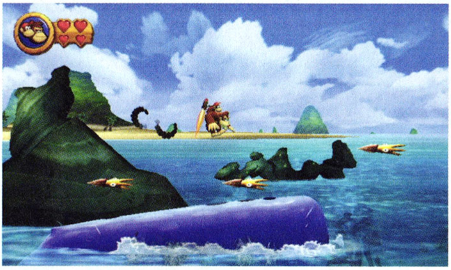
One of the coolest things about this game is that it always throws new stuff at you, even in the later stages. There is an abundance of neat ideas: a giant octopus chases you through an entire level; you board a Rocket Barrel to take on a pirate ship; you have to outrun millions of angry spiders; you must quickly climb a massive structure that's sinking in lava; and so on. Every stage has been lavished with a level of detail that you find in the likes of Nintendo's very best games; it feels as though the

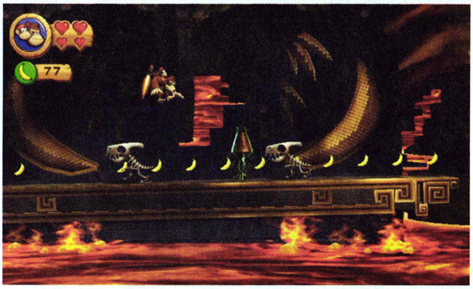
[All screens] Donkey Kong Country Returns boasts an impressively wide variety of challenges and scenery.





[Below] Some of the toughest moments come when platforms are constantly sinking or crumbling, forcing you to charge recklessly forward.

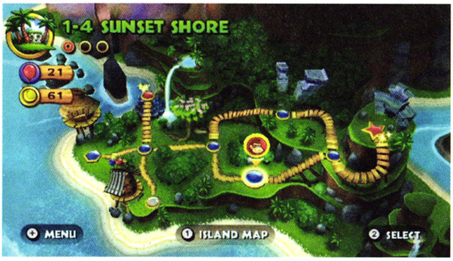


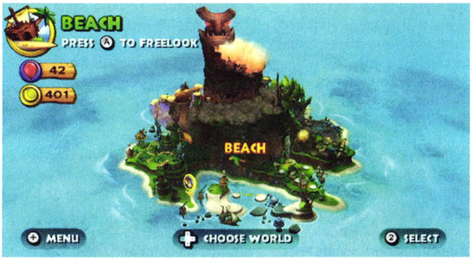


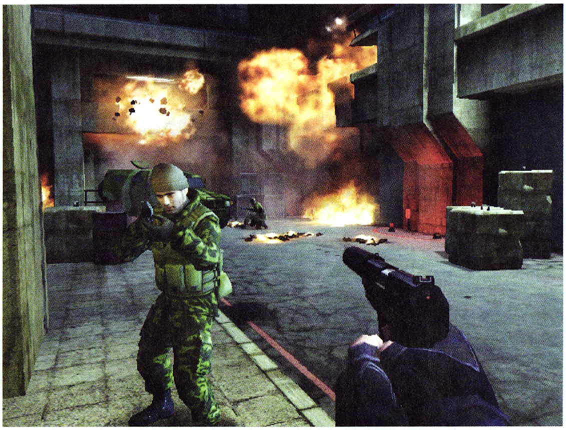
developers refused to skimp on anything. (Well, they do repeat one boss, which is a little cheap. And the boss battles in general, while enjoyable and humorous, aren't quite up there with the genre's best. Nonetheless, you don't often find games that have been polished to this degree.)

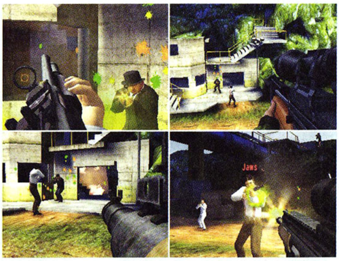
Simultaneous two-player co-op—a series first—is fun for what it is but doesn't impact the game much. Maybe I've been spoiled by New Super Mario Bros. Wii—in which players can discover ways to work together that provide opportunities that aren't possible when playing solo—but I would have liked to have seen some co-op-exclusive moves and strategies. Swinging through the jungle with a pal is still a ton of fun, although coordinating with each other can make the game's toughest challenges even harder, and you may be hesitant to let a less-experienced partner race through your hard-earned extra lives since you both pull from the same reserve. When choosing between Donkey Kong and Diddy Kong for co-op action, players will find the primates' biggest distinctions to be Diddy's full-time use of his Barrel Jet (he has to hop on Donkey Kong's back to share this useful hover-jump ability) and the extra reach his Peanut Popgun has over Donkey Kong's ground pound, both of which stun enemies. The differences don't amount to much, but it still would have been nice to have the option to play as Diddy Kong in the single-player game, which is strangely missing.

Niggling concerns aside, Donkey Kong Country Returns is an amazing game, and a highlight of a year that gave us top-notch platformers such as Sonic Colors, Kirby's Epic Yarn, and Super Mario Galaxy 2. The game holds true to the spirit of its Super NES predecessors while surpassing them in every area. Let's get the nice folks at Retro started on the next sequel straight away—or at least before another 14 years go by. —**CHRIS S.**









[Above] A game in which Jaws and Oddjob shoot paintballs at each other? Yeah, this is definitely GoldenEye.

As Good as Gold

GOLDENEYE 007

RATING: 8.5

PLATFORM: **Wii**
PUBLISHER: **ACTIVISION**
DEVELOPER: **EUROCOM**
ESRB: **TEEN**

I must admit to feeling some trepidation when I first set eyes on Activision's GoldenEye 007. Here was an awesome property that had already been tarnished once when Electronic Arts tried to return to it with GoldenEye: Rogue Agent, and I felt that everyone should have left well enough alone. In the end, though, I'm very glad Activision and developer Eurocom decided to revisit the beloved Nintendo 64 classic, as they did a bang-up job of taking the basic framework of the 1997 original and reimagining it for a 21st-century audience.

Obviously, the gameplay and graphics have been stepped up significantly. It's been nearly a decade and a half since the N64 game's release, after all, and major strides have been made in both of those departments. But this GoldenEye is also a much more cinematic adventure than its inspiration. Eurocom seems to have taken what it learned about first-person cut-scenes and scripted sequences from the great Dead Space: Extraction and implemented it here. Combined with some solid voice acting, the sequences really make the game feel like a James Bond film—though a much more contemporary one than the 1995 *GoldenEye* flick, and featuring a lot more shooting.

The shooting works well, too, when using the Classic, GameCube, or Wii Remote and Nunchuk controllers. Despite having more precision with the remote's pointer, I prefer using the Classic Controller Pro. The game seems to have been made with that controller in mind, as all of the button functions are laid out more logically with it than they are with the other control schemes (even if you bring the control-customization options to bear).

You definitely want to ensure that you have good controls for multiplayer—which is perhaps the most important part of GoldenEye 007. The N64 title was one of the most fondly remembered multiplayer titles of its era, and a lot of what made that game's multiplayer mode so successful is carried over here. You've got four-player split-screen with modifiers including headshots-only and melee-only matches. (The latter is especially silly, as everyone has giant Donkey Kong–esque hands instead of weapons.) I do have to say that I missed the N64 game's maps, however. The new maps aren't bad at all; but I'm just so accustomed to playing on those old maps that they feel like a fundamental part of the game.

While playing via a split screen provides some retro fun, I enjoyed playing online more. Sure, it's more traditional—no goofy modifiers here—but the online portion supports up to eight players in a variety of game types. In addition to the Conflict (deathmatch), Team Conflict, and Golden Gun modes—all three of which are available in the offline multiplayer, as well—you get modes such as Black Box (in which one team attempts to hold onto a briefcase while the other team tries to destroy it) and GoldenEye (wherein two teams vie for control of consoles strewn across the map in order to sic the GoldenEye satellite on their opponents' base). What has me coming back for more, though, is not just the game types, but the leveling up and gaining access to new weapons and gadgets/perks. It's basically Call of Duty with a James Bond backdrop, which is fine by me. However, I do wish these characters could actually jump instead of just being able to climb onto things.

This fusion of the cinematic presentation, the solid controls, and the off- and online multiplayer makes for a fantastic overall package. Granted, this probably won't supplant the original in most people's minds, but Activision's GoldenEye is awesome in its own right.

—JUSTIN C.

WRITERS' BLOCK

WHICH DISNEY WORLD WOULD YOU ADD TO THE NEXT KINGDOM HEARTS?

JUSTIN CHENG

I'd get a kick out of Sora and company taking a voyage 20,000 leagues under the sea in Captain Nemo's *Nautilus*.

CHRIS HOFFMAN

Since Disney owns Marvel now, why not add the X-Men to the mix? There are so many good stories and characters to tap into. Sora vs. Dark Phoenix?

CASEY LOE

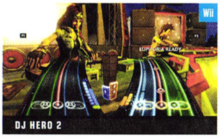
We got Chip and Dale, but what about the world and the rest of the cast of Chip 'n' Dale Rescue Rangers? I miss you, Gadget.

CHRIS SLATE

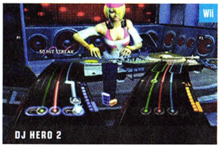
I vote for Disney's latest traditionally animated feature, *The Princess and the Frog*. I'd love to see what Sora could get up to with a pair of wisecracking frogs, a trumpet-playing alligator, and a voodoo villain, and the film's catchy jazz numbers would provide a great score.

STEVE THOMASON

My vote is for them bring in some Pixar stuff, especially *Toy Story*. That seems like it would be a perfect fit, and I'd love to see what happens when Buzz Lightyear meets Donald Duck.



DJ HERO 2



DJ HERO 2

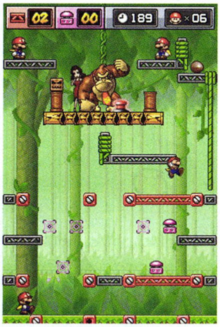
DJ HERO 2

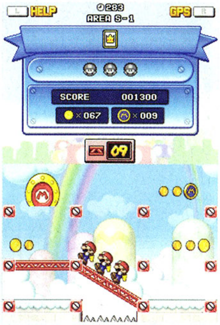
RATING: 9.0

PLATFORM: **Wii**
PUBLISHER: **ACTIVISION**
DEVELOPER: **FREESTYLE GAMES**
ESRB: **TEEN**

For its encore performance, DJ Hero 2 takes the excellent turntable-based rhythm mechanics from the original and refines the experience with a nip here and a tuck there. There are abundant modes to choose from, including the new Empire campaign, as well as a full complement of online multiplayer options. You can now also sing along with the songs using a supported microphone. To put it simply, DJ Hero 2 offers a comprehensive experience for both single and multiple players, and the objectives have enough variations to keep the game interesting even after you've made it through the playlists a hundred times.

For any music game, the song list is of paramount importance, and DJ Hero 2 has a great selection (though it's heavy on the rap and dance genres), including a surprisingly great mash-up of Snow's "Informer" and The Jackson 5's "ABC." Even if you're not a fan of the music, the game mechanics work so well that you won't care. In fact, if you don't consider yourself a fan of music games in general, we still recommend giving DJ Hero 2 a shot. It's a wonderfully empowering game that's as addictive as it is unique. **—DEAN R.**





Still Marching On

MARIO VS. DONKEY KONG: MINI-LAND MAYHEM!

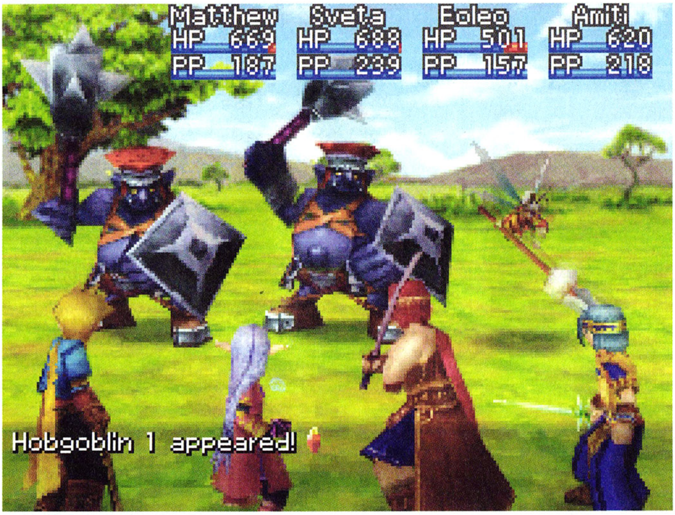
RATING: 7.5

PLATFORM: **NINTENDO DS**
PUBLISHER: **NINTENDO**
DEVELOPER: **NST**
ESRB: **EVERYONE**

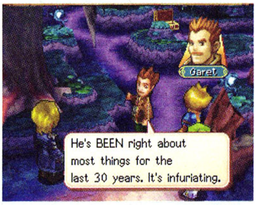
Following in the footsteps of its predecessors, Mario vs. Donkey Kong: Mini-Land Mayhem! offers a solid mix of puzzles and platforming. As in the previous installment in the series, you don't get to control the wind-up Mini Mario characters directly; all you do is set them in motion, then use your noggin to manipulate the environment so they don't go marching to their doom. It's a fun formula that worked well previously, and it's even more effective this time thanks to more stuff to interact with. Every world adds more parts to work with—girders, springs, conveyor belts, pipes, ladders, cannons, wooden walls, and more—and elements such as magnetic floors and new enemies keep the action fresh. Special stages with multiple exits or keys add to the variety, while the Mario love helps the appeal. Numerous nods to Super Mario Bros. 2 (especially the musical cues) are much appreciated.

The problem is that the game simply isn't very ambitious. There's nothing wrong with what's on tap, but none of the standard levels are particularly satisfying (even when you play them flawlessly), and you never get that "wow" moment that usually accompanies the Mario name.

Nonetheless, there's a lot of enjoyable content here—including unlockable special stages and a more-difficult mode after the credits roll—and if you still want more, you can make it yourself via the series's trademark custom-level editor. Not only does it offer more flexibility than ever before, but there's a great infrastructure in place for downloading a wealth of fan-made and Nintendo-made stages, which could give this game some serious longevity. **—CHRIS H.**

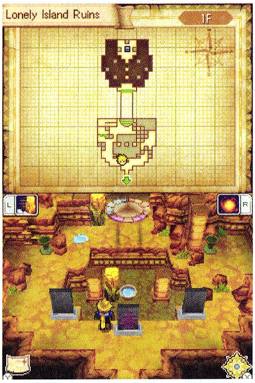


Hobgoblin 1 appeared!



He's BEEN right about most things for the last 30 years. It's infuriating.

[Above] Garet hasn't aged much since the first game, but he has grown a sweet 'stache.



Shining Brightly

GOLDEN SUN: DARK DAWN

RATING: 8.0

PLATFORM: **NINTENDO DS**
PUBLISHER: **NINTENDO**
DEVELOPER: **CAMELOT**
ESRB: **EVERYONE 10+**

This has been a year of unlikely comebacks. First we got Sin & Punishment: Star Successor, then NBA Jam made its triumphant return, and now developer Camelot brings us a third installment in the Golden Sun series. It's like the gaming industry has suddenly become our fairy godmother. What's next, a new Kid Icarus?

Golden Sun: Dark Dawn is set 30 years after its Game Boy Advance predecessors, and just as the acclaimed role-playing saga has transitioned from one generation of hardware to the next, its original protagonists have passed the torch to their children. Though Isaac and company saved the land of Weyard at the end of the previous game, their actions weren't without consequences. New threats loom, and our young heroes are called upon to follow in their parents' footsteps. Along the way they'll encounter a number of familiar faces, from major personalities like Garet and Kraden to obscure characters that only the most hardcore fans will remember. (Eoleo or Kushinada, anyone?) The devil is in the details, and Camelot continues to craft a compelling, wonderfully realized world that draws you in deeper with every visit. At the same time, Dark Dawn does a nice job of bringing newcomers up to speed. Key terms are highlighted in the game's text, for example, and tapping them calls up a quick-reference guide on the top screen that explains their significance. If you haven't played the older titles, certain callbacks and cameos obviously won't resonate as strongly, but you're never left confused.

Like their folks, our new adventurers are Adepts, which means they can control the elements using magical powers called Psynergy. These abilities come into play not only during battle, but also while exploring the puzzle-filled dungeons that are a series hallmark. Starting out, your party can move objects from afar, extend vines, launch fireballs, and create whirlwinds. They'll learn additional powers throughout their travels, including some new to the series, such as a telekinetic slap. Though Golden Sun's overall structure has always been very conventional, this particular wrinkle allows the dungeons to evolve constantly and keeps you engaged in a way that most RPGs can't. With rare exception, Dark Dawn's puzzles are more clever than frustrating, and dial in the difficulty just right.

The game's turn-based battles, on the other hand, are strangely devoid of challenge. It's not that combat lacks depth—far from it. You can swap party members in and out midskirmish; different weapons bestow their

Matthew HP 727
Sveta HP 499
Eoleo HP 501
Amiti HP 517

[Below] Nothing terrifies foes like a critical strike from a wooden stick!

Matthew HP 91 PP 26
Karis HP 59 PP 40

Karis's wooden stick
unleashes its Critical Strike!

users with unique special attacks; and the complex Djinn system returns, offering all sorts of strategic considerations. The problem is, almost none of that matters when the enemies—including most bosses—are such pushovers. Not once in the 35 hours it took me to finish Dark Dawn was I ever in danger of seeing the Game Over screen. That certainly wasn't the case with previous entries in the series. It's a shame that Camelot felt compelled to make this one so much easier.

At least the battles look great, with detailed character models and lots of flashy spell effects, not to mention awe-inspiring summon sequences that unfold across both screens. Some fans will no doubt lament the franchise's switch from hand-drawn visuals to polygons, but the charming aesthetic remains, and the change allows the developers to frame events as they see fit. That's especially beneficial during in-game cut-scenes, which are a lot more dynamic than they were in the GBA titles and do a better job of conveying the story. I'm a big proponent of 2D, but in this case, I think Camelot made the right choice. Dark Dawn also boasts a quality, if sometimes inconsistent, soundtrack.

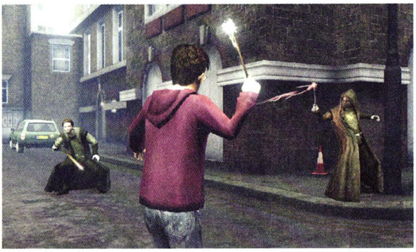
The whole experience comes together with a tremendous amount of polish. This development team has been making RPGs a long time (since 1991's Shining in the Darkness for the Sega Genesis), and it's developed a knack for minimizing traditional genre annoyances. You can save the game at any time, buying and selling new equipment has never been more user-friendly, and there are multiple ways to reduce the frequency of random encounters (which are already sparse in the puzzle-heavy areas). Over the course of a lengthy quest, those little things can make a big difference.

Like the original Golden Sun, Dark Dawn concludes with a major cliffhanger and leaves a lot of important plot threads unresolved. It was sort of cool in the first game, but in this case it just feels unsatisfying, perhaps because many of the big issues brought up at the beginning of the story are never even touched on again. Plus, we had to wait seven years for this installment, so who knows when we'll see the next? That said, the narrative has some genuinely great moments, and true to that subtitle, it's not afraid to get dark at times. Though the final destination may be a bit frustrating, the journey is one worth taking. **—STEVE T.**

Matthew HP 669 PP 187
Sveta HP 688 PP 239
Eoleo HP 501 PP 157
Amiti HP 620 PP 218

Sveta attacks!
Gillman takes 187 damage!
Matthew attacks!

[Above right] Perhaps when Matthew finishes saving the world he can take on a real challenge—the Lumberjack World Championships.



Bad Magic

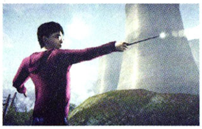
HARRY POTTER AND THE DEATHLY HALLOWS—PART 1

RATING: 4.0

PLATFORM: **Wii**
PUBLISHER: **ELECTRONIC ARTS**
DEVELOPER: **EA BRIGHT LIGHT**
ESRB: **TEEN**

The world of Harry Potter covers an intriguing range of extremes. The stories are whimsical yet dark, the characters funny but flawed, and both children and adults are obsessively immersed in its intricate wizard universe. Likewise, although *Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows* is a great book, this game is the pits.

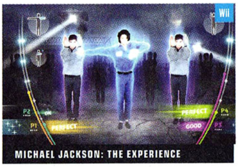
Essentially a cover-based shooter with a few on-rails and stealth segments shoehorned in, Deathly Hallows just reeks of slapdash development. Besides the ugly graphics and horrendous AI, the core gameplay mechanic—taking cover behind objects and shooting—is rarely effective. You're almost always fighting either the awkward camera or the dodgy Wii Remote controls that make any quick movement impossible.



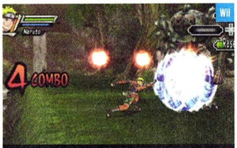
Even on a superficial level Deathly Hallows fails to deliver, showcasing a number of graphical glitches such as characters passing through solid objects or getting stuck in the environment. And don't look too closely at any of the characters, or you'll notice their mannequinlike stares and animations.

Unfortunately, the Harry Potter license doesn't make this game good. In fact, unless you're already familiar with the story, you'll have absolutely no idea what's happening, as the storytelling is nonexistent. A few random cut-scenes spliced together do not a story make. By the end of the game's five or so hours of play (and a terribly anticlimactic end battle), you'll be left scratching your head.

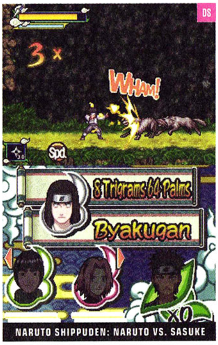
Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows has few redeeming qualities. As a game it feels unfinished and sloppy; and as a complement to the book and movie, it's worthless. It's a sad day when the world's most famous wizard has lost all of his magic. **—DEAN R.**



MICHAEL JACKSON: THE EXPERIENCE



NARUTO SHIPPUDEN: DRAGON BLADE CHRONICLES



NARUTO SHIPPUDEN: NARUTO VS. SASUKE

MICHAEL JACKSON: THE EXPERIENCE

RATING: 6.5

PLATFORM: **Wii**
PUBLISHER: **UBISOFT**
DEVELOPER: **UBISOFT MONTPELLIER WITH JUST DANCE TEAM PARIS**
ESRB: **EVERYONE 10+**

Rhythm-based games are usually fairly straightforward—match your feet to the arrows, strum/drum/sing along with the notes, and so on. With Michael Jackson: The Experience, this is not the case. The real "experience" is in matching your dance movements to those of onscreen Michael's, which are also (sometimes confusingly) illustrated by stick figures on the side of the screen. As the title suggests, songs are limited to Michael Jackson hits, performed music-video-style for you to follow along with. Although the game isn't great, if you like MJ's music and can mimic his moves it isn't terrible either. But if doing the "Thriller" dance doesn't sound appealing, this game may not be for you—even with all its pelvis-thrusting glory. **—CODY M.**

NARUTO SHIPPUDEN: DRAGON BLADE CHRONICLES

RATING: 4.5

PLATFORM: **Wii**
PUBLISHER: **TOMY**
DEVELOPER: **TOMY**
ESRB: **EVERYONE 10+**

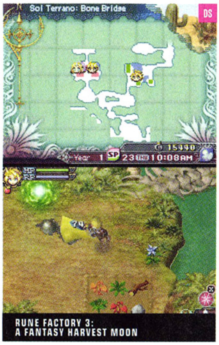
Unlike last year's Naruto Shippuden game on Wii, Dragon Blade Chronicles is a more typical third-person action title than a one-on-one fighting extravaganza. Also unlike last year's game, DBC is unusually bad. The combat is imprecise, the uncontrollable camera angles are often less than ideal, and the game frequently slows to a crawl when just a few enemies are onscreen. The overall presentation is also very poor, with unnatural pauses between spoken lines, and terribly boring environments. It simply feels like almost no effort was put into the game on almost any level. The Naruto license could have been DBC's saving grace, but everything great about Naruto (flashy fight sequences and jutsu moves, great characterization, etc.) is missing here. Even die-hard fans should stay away. **—DEAN R.**

NARUTO SHIPPUDEN: NARUTO VS. SASUKE

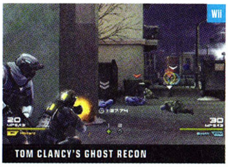
RATING: 5.0

PLATFORM: **NINTENDO DS**
PUBLISHER: **TOMY**
DEVELOPER: **TOMY**
ESRB: **EVERYONE 10+**

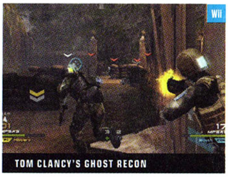
More a tweaked version of the Ninja Council games than a brand-new concept, Naruto vs. Sasuke is a very average 2D action game with some annoying quirks. It's filled with blind jumps and cheap enemy hits that will drive less-patient players crazy, and the jumping physics are stiff and awkward. And then there are the boss battles, which simply aren't very fun. Sadly, these are the same problems found in the previous games—where's the progress? Naruto vs. Sasuke isn't unplayable by any means, but it feels hastily made. The graphics are colorful (though incredibly basic) and optional side missions add some diversity to the gameplay, but there's nothing here that hasn't been done far better in other games. **—DEAN R.**



RUNE FACTORY 3:
A FANTASY HARVEST MOON



TOM CLANCY'S GHOST RECON



TOM CLANCY'S GHOST RECON

RUNE FACTORY 3: A FANTASY HARVEST MOON

RATING: 8.5

PLATFORM: **NINTENDO DS**
PUBLISHER: **NATSUME**
DEVELOPER: **MARVELOUS ENTERTAINMENT**
ESRB: **EVERYONE**

This latest entry in the dungeon-crawling RPG spinoff franchise of Harvest Moon shows a noticeable improvement over its predecessor. The series's trademark mix of farming, gardening, maiden-wooing, monster-slaying, and treasure-hunting is there, yet subtle improvements freshen the formula.

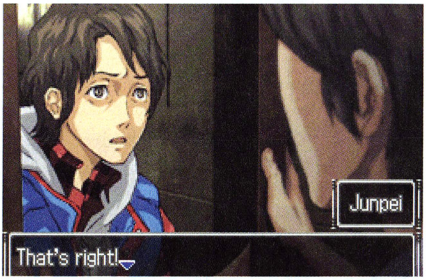
A stronger story element focuses on the part-monster hero's goal to mend an age-old conflict between nearby human and monster settlements so they can eventually unite to stop dark forces that are working to destroy them. Beyond setting up some interesting plot twists, this gives you a good reason to explore the two towns; you have a home base at each town when you're in the right form. Switching between human and monster forms broadens the fighting and NPC-interaction possibilities substantially, and the ability to bring befriended comrades into battle is a nice touch. Both settlements have a slew of missions for you to take on, offering cool rewards and special items for tackling harder tasks. Though the quests range from slaying a certain number of foes of a specific type to making deliveries for local citizens, they're a good break from other day-to-day tasks. Ultimately, Rune Factory 3 has just enough newness to merit another sweet go-around. **—NATHAN M.**

TOM CLANCY'S GHOST RECON

RATING: 6.0

PLATFORM: **Wii**
PUBLISHER: **UBISOFT**
DEVELOPER: **NEXT LEVEL GAMES**
ESRB: **TEEN**

Despite being part of the long-running franchise of the same name, Tom Clancy's Ghost Recon doesn't feel like any of its predecessors—this Wii game is more akin to Activision's Transformers: Cybertron Adventures (which was also made by Next Level Games). It's disappointing, especially given the depth of the other iterations, but this Ghost Recon has its charms. There's a good variety of weaponry at your disposal, and you do have to play much more tactically than you did in Cybertron Adventures—particularly during the stealth sections. Unfortunately, these parts can be more frustrating than they should be due to the actions (or inactions) of your AI partner, so it's best to have a human buddy by your side. **—JUSTIN C.**



The Great Escape

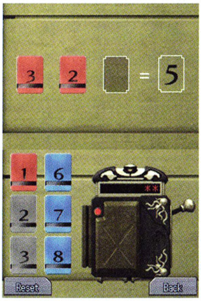
NINE HOURS, NINE PERSONS, NINE DOORS

RATING: 9.0

PLATFORM: **NINTENDO DS**
PUBLISHER: **AKSYS GAMES**
DEVELOPER: **CHUNSOFT**
ESRB: **MATURE**

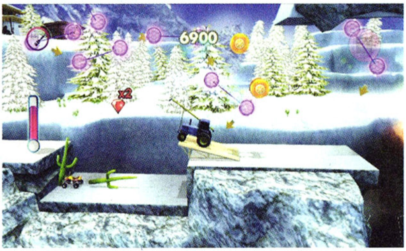
You may not think you're a fan of "visual novel"-style adventure games, but Nine Hours, Nine Persons, Nine Doors is the one that will change your mind. Not only is its twisty story thoroughly engrossing, but its puzzle-filled escape sequences offer satisfying bursts of gameplay that are a first for the genre.

On the surface, 999 is about nine people trying to escape a murderous game on a sinking ship. But each of its numerous plot twists peels away another layer of an elaborate mythology that could rival the TV series *Lost*. Not every question has a definitive answer, but the game is packed with enough interesting and original ideas to inspire weeks of heated message-board discussion. To break up the story, the game periodically offers up escape sequences in which players can freely explore the game's detailed environments for items that can be used in a series of clever puzzles. Both the visual-novel elements and the escape sequences would make decent games by themselves, and the two combine for an especially rich experience.



My one major beef with 999 involves its structure. A good story needs a good ending, and although 999 has one, it isn't easy to find. Players must replay the game multiple times, taking different routes to unlock progressively better endings. On subsequent playthroughs, the game allows you to skip text you've already read, but you still need to replay the puzzles (not so fun the second time). And the path to the true ending is frustratingly unclear; instead of being rewarded for making the right decisions, you basically have to stumble onto it.

While I didn't enjoy the repetition, I loved every new minute of 999's slick puzzles and riveting story. The score above wasn't chosen for comedy's sake; 999 truly is one of my favorite games of the year. **—CASEY L.**



Clash of Ideas

CREATE

RATING: 5.0

PLATFORM: **Wii**
PUBLISHER: **ELECTRONIC ARTS**
DEVELOPER: **EA BRIGHT LIGHT**
ESRB: **EVERYONE**

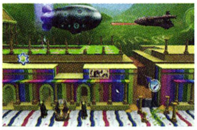
Create is a game with an identity crisis. On one hand, it's a physics-based puzzler; on the other, it's a decoration sim. Other than the fact that the activities take place in the same environments and use the same play mechanics for placing, moving, and manipulating objects, the two gameplay types don't exactly go hand in hand.

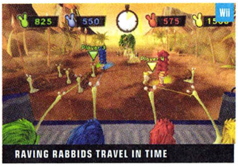
As a gamer, I found the puzzle aspect to be the more enjoyable part of the experience. In each of the game's themed stages, you're tasked with completing numerous challenges—usually involving getting an object from one place to another, sometimes while collecting items along the way. For most tasks, you have only a few item types at your disposal, and figuring out how to position them and chain their actions together to achieve your goal is generally fun. It certainly helps that there's no single answer; any solution that works is a good one. It's also nice that the physics remain consistent with each puzzle attempt so you can perfect your solution through trial and error with minimal frustration. Still, a lack of personality and puzzle variety kept my interest at bay.

The decoration aspect of the game is even less inspired. Sure, there are tons of textures and painting options and objects to place, but all you're doing is dressing up the existing scene. Despite the game's title, you aren't really creating anything—just prettying it up. It's also incongruous that you're required to perform certain actions in sequence (change a texture here, place a stamp there, put some flowers here, etc.) in a game that's supposed to be about open-endedness. Additionally, the entire package suffers from some wonky controls and interface issues. —**CHRIS H.**

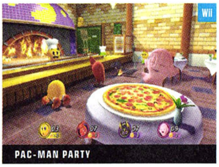
Objects remaining: 3

Parts remaining: 22

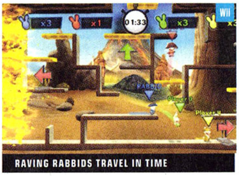




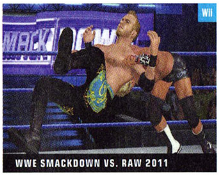
RAVING RABBIDS TRAVEL IN TIME



PAC-MAN PARTY



RAVING RABBIDS TRAVEL IN TIME



WWE SMACKDOWN VS. RAW 2011

RAVING RABBIDS TRAVEL IN TIME

RATING: 6.5

PLATFORM: **Wii**
PUBLISHER: **UBISOFT**
DEVELOPER: **UBISOFT PARIS**
ESRB: **EVERYONE 10+**

The Rabbids have plagued our world and attempted to invade our moon, and now they afflict our fourth dimension! The rascally lagomorphs have returned with yet another collection of minigames, this time spanning the high points of human and prehuman history. But we must wonder: at what point do we have one too many minigame collections of "BWAAA"-ing madness? Though some of the activities have an amusing setting and an entertaining gimmick, a fair share fall flat and repeat their mechanics in other minigames, reducing Travel in Time's collection of 23 minigames (not including other little distractions found around the museum) to about a dozen that you and your friends might want to play more than a couple times. —**DAVID M.**

PAC-MAN PARTY

RATING: 4.5

PLATFORM: **Wii**
PUBLISHER: **NAMCO BANDAI**
DEVELOPER: **NAMCO BANDAI**
ESRB: **EVERYONE 10+**

Essentially, Pac-Man Party is a less-than-fun Mario Party/Monopoly hybrid. You move around a game board, automatically place castles on spaces you land on, and if someone lands on your castle, you battle them for it in a minigame that can also win you cookies. With no turn counter or time limit, accumulating a certain number of cookies is your goal, causing the already painfully boring games to drag on far longer than necessary. While junk-food-glorified minigames are the obvious highlight of Pac-Man Party, most of them don't feel polished and aren't satisfying, save for a very small few. It may be Pac-Man's 30th-birthday bash, but this is one party for which you'll want to decline the invite. —**CODY M.**

WWE SMACKDOWN VS. RAW 2011

RATING: 7.5

PLATFORM: **Wii**
PUBLISHER: **THQ**
DEVELOPER: **YUKE'S**
ESRB: **TEEN**

If you're a hardcore wrestling fan, WWE SmackDown vs. Raw 2011 is worth checking out for the brilliant new WWE Universe mode alone. Essentially a fully customizable season/manager mode, it enables you to spend hours, days, weeks, or even months guiding the direction of your federation and managing the careers of all your favorite (or least-favorite) superstars. Unfortunately, a lot of the title's other features fall flat. The stale graphics haven't improved since last year, the removal of the strong grapple modifier hurts the gameplay, and the commentary is nonsense. (One time Michael Cole claimed that Vance Archer was going for a pin when he wasn't even in the match!) The backstage exploration segments in Road to WrestleMania mode could have been cool, but they're almost unplayable thanks to a way-too-close camera. —**CHRIS H.**

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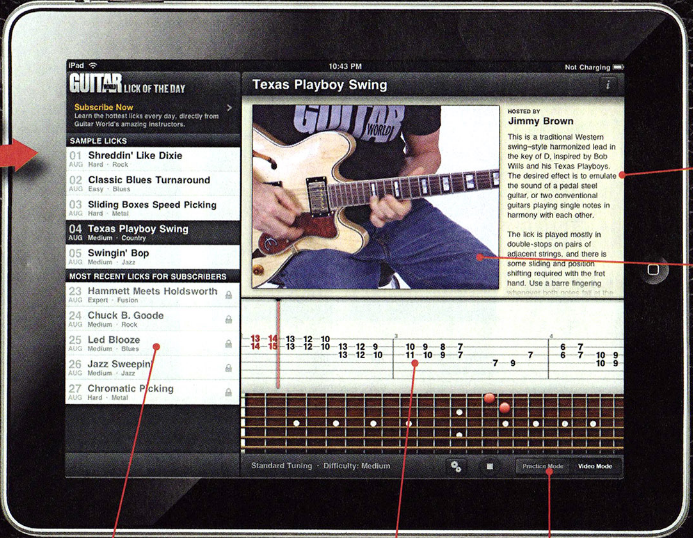

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- 27 AUG Chromatic Picking · Hard · Metal

Texas Playboy Swing

HOSTED BY
Jimmy Brown

This is a traditional Western swing–style harmonized lead in the key of D, inspired by Bob Wills and his Texas Playboys. The desired effect is to emulate the sound of a pedal steel guitar, or two conventional guitars playing single notes in harmony with each other.

The lick is played mostly in double-stops on pairs of adjacent strings, and there is some sliding and position shifting required with the fret hand. Use a barre fingering

Standard Tuning · Difficulty: Medium

Performance notes written by GUITAR WORLD

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REVIEWS ARCHIVE

THE COMPLETE LIST OF NINTENDO POWER REVIEWS FROM THE PAST YEAR

SCORES REFLECT INDIVIDUAL REVIEWERS' OPINIONS

Wii

TITLE	SCORE	PUBLISHER	VOL.	ESRB
2010 FIFA World Cup South Africa	6.5	Electronic Arts	254	E
Academy of Champions: Soccer	6.5	Ubisoft	248	E
All Star Karate	7.0	THQ	255	E10+
Arc Rise Fantasia	7.5	Ignition	256	T
Astro Boy: The Video Game	7.5	D3Publisher	248	E10+
Attack of the Movies 3D	4.0	Majesco	255	T
Avatar: The Game	5.0	Ubisoft	250	T
Batman: The Brave and the Bold: The Video Game	7.0	Warner Bros. Interactive	260	E10+
Call of Duty: Modern Warfare: Reflex	9.0	Activision	249	M
Calling	5.0	Hudson	253	T
Dance Dance Revolution: Hottest Party 3	6.5	Konami	248	E10+
Data East Arcade Classics	6.5	Majesco	252	T
Deca Sports 3	4.5	Hudson	261	E
Despicable Me: The Game	4.0	D3Publisher	258	E10+
DJ Hero	8.5	Activision	249	T
Dragon Ball: Revenge of King Piccolo	6.5	Namco Bandai	248	E10+
Drawn to Life: The Next Chapter	7.0	THQ	248	E
Endless Ocean: Blue World	7.5	Nintendo	252	E10+
FIFA Soccer 10	6.0	Electronic Arts	248	E
FIFA Soccer 11	8.0	Electronic Arts	260	E
Final Fantasy Crystal Chronicles: The Crystal Bearers	8.0	Square Enix	250	T
FlingSmash	7.5	Artoon	261	E
Flip's Twisted World	6.0	Majesco	260	E
Fragile Dreams: Farewell Ruins of the Moon	5.5	XSEED	253	T
Green Day: Rock Band	8.0	MTV	256	T
Guilty Party	7.0	Disney	259	E
Guitar Hero: Warriors of Rock	8.0	MTV	261	T
Gunblade NY & LA Machineguns Arcade Hits Pack	5.5	Sega	259	T
Harvest Moon: Animal Parade	7.5	Natsume	248	E
Iron Man 2	4.0	Sega	256	T
Ivy the Kiwi?	7.5	XSEED	259	E
Jambo! Safari	3.5	Sega	250	E
Karaoke Revolution	6.0	Konami	248	T
Kirby's Epic Yarn	8.5	Nintendo	261	E
The Last Airbender	6.0	THQ	257	T
LEGO Harry Potter: Years 1-4	7.5	Warner Bros. Interactive	257	E10+
LEGO Indiana Jones 2: The Adventure Continues	6.5	LucasArts	249	E10+
LEGO Rock Band	8.0	Warner Bros. Interactive	249	E10+
Legend of the Guardians: The Owls of Ga'Hoole	4.5	Warner Bros. Interactive	260	E10+
The Lord of the Rings: Aragorn's Quest	5.5	Warner Bros. Interactive	260	T
Madden NFL 11	8.5	Electronic Arts	258	E
Major League Baseball 2K10	7.0	2K Sports	253	E
Marvel Ultimate Alliance 2	5.5	Activision	248	T
Metroid: Other M	8.5	Nintendo	259	T
Monster Hunter Tri	9.0	Capcom	254	T
MySims Skyheroes	7.5	Electronic Arts	260	E10+
Namco Museum Megamix	5.0	Namco Bandai	261	E
Naruto Shippuden: Clash of Ninja Revolution 3	7.5	Tomy	249	T
NBA 2K11	6.5	2K Sports	261	E
NBA Jam	9.0	Electronic Arts	260	E
Need for Speed Nitro	7.0	Electronic Arts	249	E10+
New Super Mario Bros. Wii	9.0	Nintendo	249	E
NHL Slapshot	6.0	Electronic Arts	259	E
No More Heroes 2: Desperate Struggle	9.0	Ubisoft	252	M
Pinball Hall of Fame: The Gottlieb Collection	6.5	Crave	251	E
Pirates Plundarrr	4.0	Majesco	255	E10+
PokéPark Wii: Pikachu's Adventure	7.5	Nintendo	261	E
Prince of Persia: The Forgotten Sands	8.0	Ubisoft	255	T
Pro Evolution Soccer 2010	8.0	Konami	250	E
Rabbids Go Home	7.0	Ubisoft	249	E10+
Racquet Sports	6.5	Ubisoft	253	E
Red Steel 2	8.0	Ubisoft	254	T
Resident Evil: The Darkside Chronicles	8.0	Capcom	249	M
Rock Band 3	9.0	MTV	261	T
Sakura Wars: So Long, My Love	7.5	NIS America	253	T
Sam & Max: Beyond Time and Space	8.0	Atari	255	T
Samurai Warriors 3	6.0	Nintendo	260	T

MORE ON:

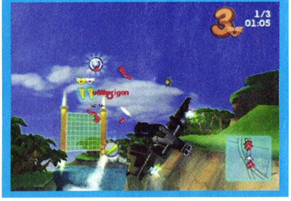
METROID: OTHER M

There are a lot of reasons to nitpick about Metroid: Other M. Does it feel exactly like classic Metroid? No. Does Samus come across as weak? Yes. Is it, as the creators had hoped, the ultimate Metroid game? Not quite. But at the end of the day, it doesn't matter. Other M is a blast in the gameplay department, and the Metroid formula of exploration, ability upgrades, and combat is as fun as it's ever been. —**CHRIS H.**

MORE ON:

MYSIMS SKYHEROES

Unfortunately, our reviewer said that MySims SkyHeroes didn't have online play when, in fact, it does. Playing with up to six people online can make this arcadey air-combat game a bit more enjoyable, but not to such an extent that it deserves a higher score. —**JUSTIN C.**



MORE ON:

KIRBY'S EPIC YARN

With Kirby's Epic Yarn, I was pleased to finally find the perfect title to turn my preschooler into a game player. While the game takes skill to master, it's easy for a novice to play at a basic level since Kirby can't take damage or die. Without the usual pressures of playing a game, my kid learned such gaming fundamentals as how to walk, jump, climb ladders, and even beat bad guys. And since the title supports co-op multiplayer, I can tag along to demonstrate new moves while helping my little partner past the tricky parts. If you're looking for a great game to share with your kids, younger siblings, or any beginning gamer, this is it. —**CHRIS S.**

Sengoku Basara: Samurai Heroes	7.0	Capcom	261	T
Shaun White Snowboarding: World Stage	7.0	Ubisoft	249	E
Shiren the Wanderer	6.5	Atlus	252	T
Sid Meier's Pirates!	8.5	2K Games	260	E10+
Silent Hill: Shattered Memories	8.0	Konami	249	M
SimAnimals Africa	5.0	Electronic Arts	248	E
Sin and Punishment: Star Successor	9.0	Nintendo	257	T
The Sky Crawlers: Innocent Aces	7.0	XSEED	250	T
Sonic Colors	9.0	Sega	261	E
Sonic & Sega All-Stars Racing	8.0	Sega	252	E
Spider-Man: Shattered Dimensions	8.0	Activision	260	T
Star Wars The Clone Wars: Republic Heroes	5.0	LucasArts	249	T
Star Wars: The Force Unleashed II	8.0	LucasArts	261	T
Super Mario Galaxy 2	9.5	Nintendo	256	E
Super Monkey Ball Step & Roll	5.5	Sega	252	E
Swords	5.0	Majesco	260	T
Tatsunoko vs. Capcom: Ultimate All-Stars	9.0	Capcom	251	T
Tiger Woods PGA Tour 11	9.0	Electronic Arts	256	E
Tournament of Legends	7.0	Sega	257	T
Toy Story 3: The Video Game	7.5	Disney	257	E10+
Transformers: Cybertron Adventures	5.0	Activision	258	T
Trauma Team	8.0	Atlus	255	T
Wii Party	7.5	Nintendo	260	RP
WWE SmackDown vs. Raw 2010	7.5	THQ	248	T

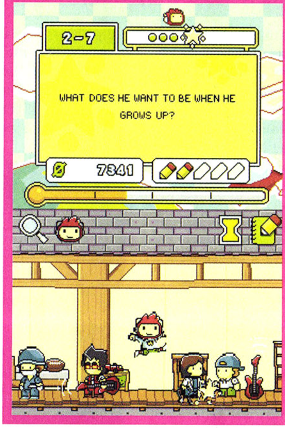
Nintendo DS

TITLE	SCORE	PUBLISHER	VOL.	ESRB
Ace Attorney Investigations: Miles Edgeworth	8.0	Capcom	252	T
Again	7.0	Tecmo Koei	253	T
Assassin's Creed II: Discovery	7.0	Ubisoft	250	T
Atari's Greatest Hits Vol. 1	5.0	Atari	261	E
Atelier Annie: Alchemists of Sera Island	8.0	NIS America	248	E10+
Avatar: The Game	5.0	Ubisoft	250	E10+
Beat City	8.5	THQ	254	E
Bejeweled Twist	8.5	PopCap	251	E
Blue Dragon: Awakened Shadow	7.5	D3Publisher	256	E10+
Bookworm DS	8.5	PopCap	249	E
Cooking Mama 3: Shop & Chop	6.0	Majesco	248	E
C.O.P. The Recruit	4.0	Ubisoft	249	T
Crafting Mama	7.0	Majesco	261	E
Crime Scene	5.0	SouthPeak	253	M
Dawn of Heroes	7.5	Majesco	253	E10+
Deca Sports DS	5.5	Hudson	253	E
Dementium II	8.0	SouthPeak	255	M
Despicable Me: The Game–Minion Mayhem	7.0	D3Publisher	258	E
Dragon Ball: Origins 2	8.0	Namco Bandai	256	T
Dragon Ball Z: Attack of the Saiyans	8.0	Namco Bandai	248	E10+
Dragon Quest IX: Sentinels of the Starry Skies	9.0	Nintendo	257	E10+
Drawn to Life: The Next Chapter	8.0	THQ	248	E
Etrian Odyssey III: The Drowned City	8.5	Altus	260	E10+
Fighting Fantasy: The Warlock of Firetop Mountain	4.0	Aspyr	248	T
Final Fantasy: The 4 Heroes of Light	8.0	Square Enix	260	E10+
Glory of Heracles	7.0	Nintendo	251	E10+
Harvest Moon: Grand Bazaar	6.0	Natsume	258	E
Harvest Moon: Sunshine Islands	7.0	Natsume	248	E
Infinite Space	8.0	Sega	253	T
Iron Man 2	6.5	Sega	256	E10+
Ivy the Kiwi?	7.0	XSEED	259	E
The Last Airbender	7.5	THQ	257	E10+
The Legend of Zelda: Spirit Tracks	9.5	Nintendo	250	E10+
LEGO Indiana Jones 2: The Adventure Continues	5.0	LucasArts	249	E10+
Lufia : Curse of the Sinistrals	8.0	Natsume	260	E10+
Mega Man Zero Collection	9.0	Capcom	256	E
Nostalgia	7.0	Ignition	248	E10+
Phantasy Star Ø	8.0	Sega	248	E10+
Picross 3D	7.5	Nintendo	255	E
Pokémon HeartGold Version	9.5	Nintendo	253	E
Pokémon Mystery Dungeon: Explorers of Sky	8.0	Nintendo	248	E
Pokémon Ranger: Guardian Signs	7.0	Nintendo	260	E
Pokémon SoulSilver Version	9.5	Nintendo	253	E
Professor Layton and the Unwound Future	9.0	Nintendo	260	E10+
Puzzle Quest 2	7.5	D3Publisher	257	E10+
Rabbids Go Home	7.0	Ubisoft	249	E
Ragnarok DS	5.0	XSEED	252	E10+
River City Soccer Hooligans	7.0	Aksys	256	T
River City Super Sports Challenge	6.0	Aksys	258	T
Rooms: The Main Building	7.0	Hudson	253	E
Sands of Destruction	7.0	Sega	250	T
Shin Megami Tensei: Strange Journey	8.0	Atlus	253	M
Sonic Colors	7.5	Sega	261	E
Sonic & Sega All-Stars Racing	6.0	Sega	252	E
Sonic Classic Collection	7.0	Sega	253	E
Space Invaders Extreme 2	8.0	Square Enix	248	E
Spider-Man: Shattered Dimensions	7.0	Activision	260	E10+
Squishy Tank	8.0	Natsume	253	E
Star Wars Battlefront: Elite Squadron	5.5	LucasArts	249	E10+
Super Scribblenauts	8.5	Warner Bros. Interactive	261	E
Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles: Arcade Attack	4.5	Ubisoft	248	E10+
Tetris Party Deluxe	8.5	Majesco	256	E
Transformers: War for Cybertron	7.0	Activision	258	E10+
WarioWare D.I.Y.	8.5	Nintendo	253	E
WireWay	6.5	Konami	249	E
WWE SmackDown vs. Raw 2010	7.0	THQ	248	T

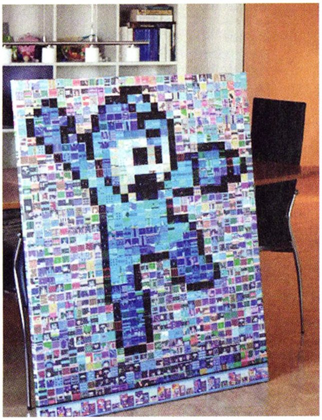
MORE ON:

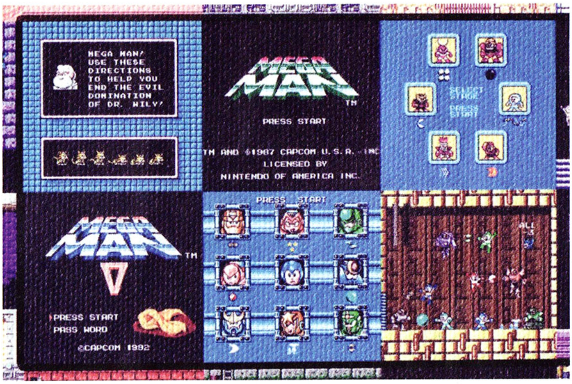
SUPER SCRIBBLENAUTS

As much as I loved the original Scribblenauts, it had more than its share of nagging flaws that could get in the way of the fun. Fortunately, Super Scribblenauts addresses pretty much all of those shortcomings, allowing the concept to realize its full potential. The addition of adjectives is just the icing on the big, delicious cake. —STEVE T.



WHAT DOES HE WANT TO BE WHEN HE GROWS UP?

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The amount of work that went into this mosaic's creation is simply staggering. Great work, Jarosh!

FANDOM

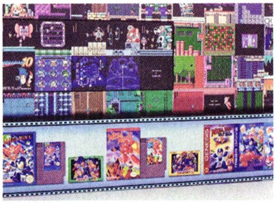
Massive Mega Man

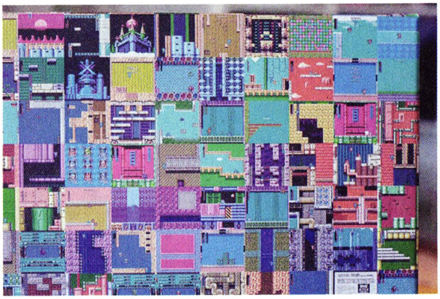
This mega-intensive mosaic is loaded with Mega Man awesomeness.

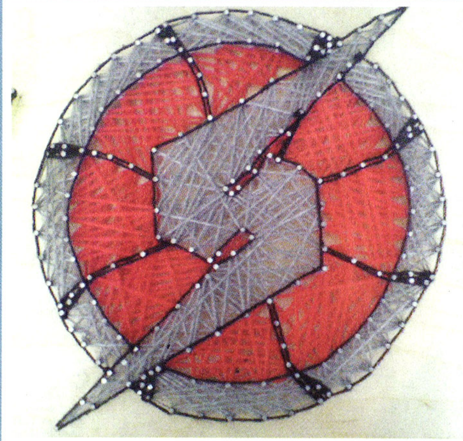
A PARTICULARLY DILIGENT gaming fan who goes by the screen name Jarosh has crafted one of the most memorable Mega Man tributes we've seen yet: a massive pixel mosaic painstakingly constructed with screenshots taken from the first six Mega Man games. This gargantuan effort is made up of more than 1,500 screenshots and touches on every stage from each of the NES Mega Man titles.

It took a long time to pull together all of the screens needed for the project. Sifting through them to weed out the bad ones was an exhaustive process, and many of the screens Jarosh kept had to be edited and cleaned up to get them just right. "It was a laborious and sometimes tedious project that took me several weeks to finish," he says. "It was also a lot of fun, though, and I loved every minute of it."

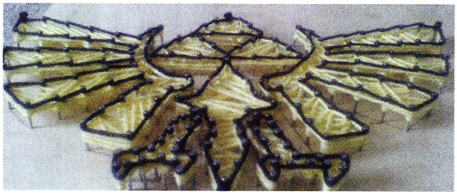
Though it took a few weeks to complete the mosaic, the extra time and effort yielded some interesting Easter eggs in the finished piece. There's the main Mega Man sprite, of course, but there are also some cool extras worked into the design, including several rows depicting all of the boss weaknesses and a section at the bottom featuring art from game boxes, cartridges, and posters. The whole thing was printed on four-foot-tall canvas and mounted on a wooden frame. That's one sweet piece of art. **—NATHAN M.**







It's pretty amazing what you can create with everyday objects.



FANDOM

Epic Yarn!

A reader nails these Nintendo-symbol re-creations

The simplest tools can be used to create artwork, and in the case of these re-creations of classic symbols from the Metroid and Legend of Zelda series, all 16-year-old Oscar Quinteros needed was a piece of wood, a handful of nails, and a bunch of colorful yarn.

Quinteros, a high-school junior from Manassas, Virginia, says he was inspired by an art-class assignment given to his younger sister, and decided to craft the Triforce and Samus's logo in a similar style. The longtime Nintendo Power subscriber started with a half-inch-thick piece of 12"x24" wood, and sketched out the design with pencil before hammering in the nails at key points. From there, completing each piece required careful attention to colors as he strung together each design and outlined the final product with black yarn.

According to Quinteros, each creation took about two days to complete, and the project wasn't terribly expensive; the grand total for materials was around $20. Next up for the self-described video game addict is a quite literal interpretation of Kirby's Epic Yarn, which will follow a similar approach, albeit with a complete yarn-based scene from the game. Hopefully he'll share the results with us! **—ANDREW H.**

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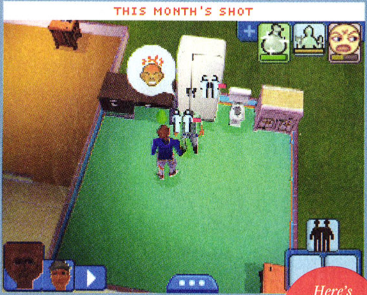
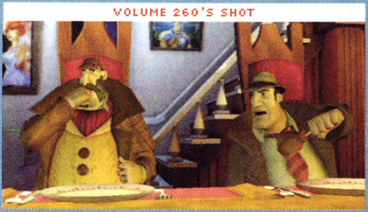
THIS MONTH'S SHOT



It's not uncommon to get into arguments with your roommate, but don't expect to win if your roomie is Ghost Rider.

Here's our caption. THINK YOU CAN DO BETTER?

VOLUME 260'S SHOT



"Thank you, thank you for that sickening sight. I may never eat again." **—GEORGE B.**

"There are better ways to wash your hands before dinner." **—RICH F.**

"The props of this new low-budget detective movie include super low stair railings, coats with overly-sized buttons, and so-called "chicken" fingers." **—BRANDON F**

"How many times have I told you? No cannibalism at the table!" **—ROB M.**

"By the way...I spit in your food." **—S@R@H**

"You gonna eat that other hand?" **—KEGO**

"KFC really needs to put warnings on their food. I've lost three fingers this week!" **—[NO NAME GIVEN]**

ABOVE *and* BEYOND

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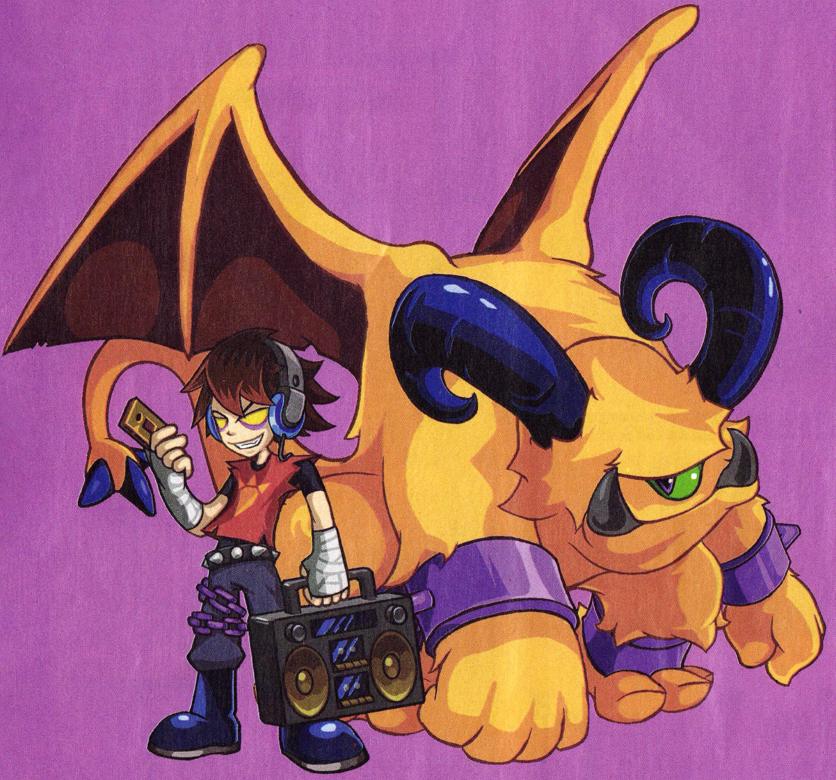

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NEXT MONTH

Now that we've cleared 2010 with 100% completion, we'll target a new year of exciting games next issue, starting with one of our most anticipated titles for Nintendo DS, Monster Tale. This exploration/monster-raising adventure is sure to be a top title in 2011, so don't miss our in-depth coverage of the game, plus fresh looks at many more hot titles.

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